

## ABSTRACT

### SPIRITUAL ABUSE IN THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

by

Barbara Olivia Berry

In the Christian community, many followers are abused spiritually by Christian leaders causing great harm and devastation to the souls of followers. This study examined Christian leaders' behavior through family systems theory, congregational theory, toxic faith systems, and the dark side of leadership theory including the biblical perspective of godly leadership, abuse of power, and the Perichoretic Leadership Model.

A mixed method research design was utilized with a nonexperimental longitudinal pretest and posttest survey and semi-structured interviews conducted in both a seminary and a congregation.

The goal of this study was the development of a spiritual abuse curriculum that will raise Christian leaders' conscious level of spiritual abuse and, perhaps, thwart spiritual abuse in the Christian community.

This study concludes with solutions to help Christian leaders avoid abusing spiritually. Examples of personal solutions include *lectio divina* and creation gifts while congregational solutions consist of laity empowerment, the congregational transformational model, the missional change model, and conflict management.

DISSERTATION APPROVAL

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A Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of

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In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Ministry

by

Barbara Olivia Berry

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## CHAPTER 1

### PROBLEM

#### Introduction

Over the past thirty years as a Christian minister and senior pastor, I have become increasingly concerned about followers whom I have ministered, counseled, and observed who were abused spiritually by Christian leaders in the Christian community. The resulting conditions were vast, ranging from hurt feelings, shame, rejection, depression, financial destitution, and suicidal tendencies. In reality, average followers are not aware of spiritual abuse until they or a loved one falls victim. The premise of this study was all Christian leaders must be cognizant of spiritual abuse and avoid perpetrating it.

The term *followers* has been used throughout this dissertation to mean persons who are devotees, believers, disciples, or constituents of a church or group with allegiance and service to the teachings, beliefs, and opinions of a leader. The term *Protestant Christian leader* was used in the dissertation but has been shortened to *Christian leader*.

Today, an abundance of evidence exists to show that spiritual abuse is within the Christian community (Enroth ix-x). Many professional counselors have determined that spiritual abuse does exist, that it is far-reaching, and that it can be as wounding as other forms of abuse, such as physical abuse and sexual abuse (Johnson and VanVonderen 29). The primary focus of this dissertation was spiritual abuse.

The term spiritual abuse raises negative connotations in the Christian community. Spiritual abuse has been seldom acknowledged or considered in the Christian community



because it implies *sin*, which is displeasing to God. A common tactic in the Christian community has been to explain away spiritual abuse by spiritualizing the behavior as Satanic, or the enemy's doing.

Spiritual abuse includes abuse of authority yet goes beyond. Spiritual abuse occurs when Christian leaders use their spiritual position to control or dominate other persons or to force others to live up to a spiritual standard without considering the persons' well-being and resulting in the authority pronouncing judgment (Johnson and VanVonderen 20-21). Christian leaders become spiritually abusive when they distort the truth and manipulate the weak for appearance's sake (Blue 69). Spiritual abuse leaves scars on the psych and soul of the followers (Enroth 29).

Spiritual abuse occurs on a continuum from rarely abusive to extreme legalism, mind control, shame, guilt, fear, coercion, excommunication, and death. Spiritual abuse is multifaceted and multi-layered, revealing itself in innumerable forms. Throughout this study various aspects of spiritual abuse were depicted in different situations to view, clarify, and identify spiritual abuse behaviors.

The Christian leaders considered for the study are seen in a myriad of leadership positions in the Christian community. Leadership has to do with the way leaders treat, develop, and relate to people and for this study was viewed as a coin. One side is bright illumination and the other a dark side of harm. Christian leaders endeavor to lead from the illuminated side with a Holy Spirit-led life of servanthood emulating Jesus. Some Christian leaders slip or explode into the character leading from the dark side, which is detrimental to the Christian community.

The *dark side* is the natural human development over a lifetime of inner urges, motivations, compulsions, and dysfunctions of personality that frequently go unexamined or remain unknown. It is labeled the dark side because it is a part of individuals and to some degree lurks in the shadow of their personalities until displayed in their behavior as an emotional explosion or major problem, which then causes them to search for a reason why.

People's personalities have been slowly intermingled with their emotions, experiences, expectations, and examples since childhood and have created their dark side (McIntosh and Rima 28-29). The dark side becomes spiritual abuse when unhealthy behaviors are acted out and not corrected.

Christian leaders often deal in a godly and illuminated manner as opposed to leading from the dark side:

Because we see our leadership and organization as having limited influence, it is easy to be duped into believing that the dark side is not a serious threat to us. But that is a lie! In fact it is a sign that our dark side is alive and well! We must be convinced that the dark side is a serious threat to how God wants to use us. (McIntosh and Rima 153)

Christian leaders must acknowledge that every person has a unique dark side as a result of their particular circumstances, personality, experiences, and family of origin, understanding that each manifestation of the dark side through exhibiting compulsiveness, narcissism, paranoia, codependency, and passive-aggressiveness has its own dangers (153).

The significant aspects of Christian leadership considered in this study were the behaviors of leaders themselves. The research reviewed how the Christian leaders'

behaviors were framed, developed, and displayed by reviewing family systems theory and congregational theory, current family system, personality, and leadership behaviors:

God can and does work through our dark side to accomplish his kingdom purposes and to elevate us to positions of leadership that we might not even have aspired to without the influence of our dark side. However, it is essential at some point that our dark side be redeemed to more adequately serve God's purposes and to be used less in satisfying our own needs. (McIntosh and Rima 155)

When God calls individuals to Christian leadership, they must acknowledge their dark side. Individuals must work at redeeming their dark side in order to be Christ-centered.

The dark side of leadership can never be eliminated, but it can be overcome providing Christian leaders intentionally exercise self-awareness, self-management, and honesty in order to keep their dark side in check (McIntosh and Rima 158 ).

All too often the Christian Community relates the moral failures and other problems that result from the dark side of our personality to the realm of spiritual warfare and demonic attack. Many Christian leaders have been taught to blame the enemy for their leadership failures. (168)

The typical Christian mind-set is that the devil is the cause of all problems. Too many Christian leaders spiritualize everything and use the spiritual realm as an excuse for the inappropriate behavior.

The examples, stories, names, and congregations in this dissertation have been omitted to protect all. An example of spiritual abuse is the personal story of a follower named Joe. Joe was a loving, caring, quiet, dedicated follower and part of a congregation for over thirty-five years.

Joe experienced an emotional and physical explosion because his senior pastor constantly insisted Joe conduct church-related matters to the senior pastor's specifications. Joe earnestly desired to be a faithful Christian and obedient follower. He

believed that his senior pastor would never do anything to harm him. Joe was repeatedly forced to make decisions against his better judgment and God's leading.

One evening during a meeting at church, Joe went into a rampage, throwing chairs and breaking windows. The police and ambulance were called. Joe was subdued, taken to the hospital, and admitted to the psychiatric ward. Many years have passed since Joe's emotional explosion; he has never recovered.

The dynamics of spiritual abuse occur between not only Christian leaders and followers but can happen between Christian leaders and their paid subordinate leaders, resulting in devastating leadership behavior. For example, the wounds of spiritual abuse perpetrated on Scott, an associate pastor of twenty-five years, along with his wife of thirty-five years was very damaging to Scott and his wife. They witnessed and experienced their senior pastor's spiritual abuse for years. Scott forgave the senior pastor and moved on to another ministry position. Today his wife refuses to attend any church.

This dissertation was difficult because it critically reviewed the behavior and motives of Christian leaders in order to understand the phenomenon of spiritual abuse. This study was undertaken in order to understand spiritual abuse and to develop solutions to avoid spiritual abuse because it is a dreadful emotional process that frequently occurs in the Christian community, destroying followers and other Christian leaders.

This dissertation is indeed a work in progress. This study was a glimpse into my experiences, learnings, and reflections of Christian leaders, including myself, and spiritual abuse.

Spiritual abuse occurs across all faith traditions such as Christianity, Judaism, and Islam, as well as in denominations, non-denominations, and ethnic cultures regardless of church size (Cumella 3). The focus of this study was Protestant Christian leaders.

Spiritual abuse is more in the character of spiritual leaders that have unhealthy personality pathologies such as narcissism, compulsiveness, passive-aggressiveness, codependency, and other dysfunctions that were developed in their family of origin.

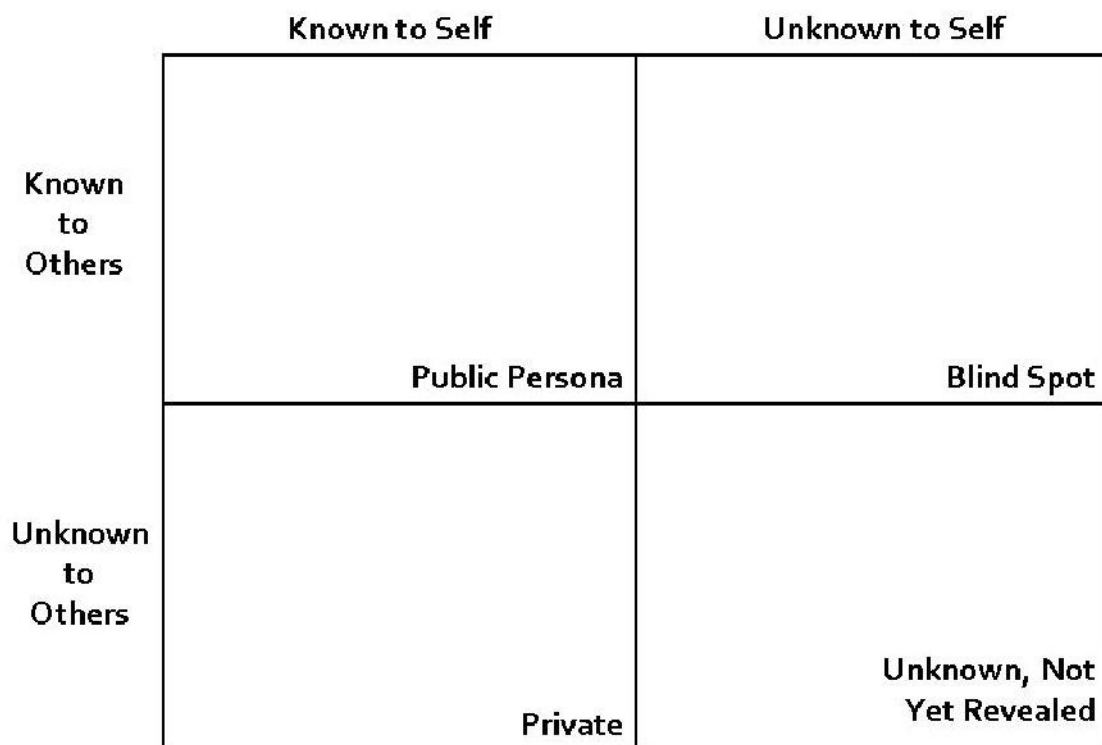
Leaders who spiritually abuse lack primal leadership, emotional intelligence, and the leading of the Holy Spirit. Spiritual leaders with these dysfunctions and other unbalanced personality pathologies suffer from unresolved emotional and relational problems developed in childhood, causing them to distort the Bible, theology, and relationships, resulting in great harm to the Christian community.

Before beginning this study, I wondered why the subject of spiritual abuse was so important to me. To help in the process, I employed the Johari window concept that I learned as a former management analyst in organizational development. Psychologists Joseph Luft and Harry Ingham created the Johari window concept. The term Johari is the beginning of both founders' first names (Hersey and Blanchard 237-39).

The Johari window framework has one window with four panes or arenas that peer into a person's being, personality, and perception. The first window pane has the things known about oneself that others do not know, labeled the public [persona]. The second window pane, to the right of the first, contains things he or she does not know about themselves but others know, and is labeled the blind spot. The third window pane, which is below the first pane, is the things known to oneself and is unknown to others, is labeled the private [self]. The fourth window pane to the right of the third window pane

and directly below the second window pane are things unknown to oneself and unknown to others, and is labeled the unknown (i.e., not yet revealed; Hersey and Blanchard 240-46). Figure 1 depicts the Johari window model.

I raised two shades of my Johari window panes to divulge my interest in spiritual abuse. Three years ago through my private self window pane, I learned that I had been spiritually abused as a follower and subordinate pastor of a multi-pastoral staff in a large Christian congregation. During the research of this study, I later became aware through my unknown, not yet revealed Johari window pane that as a senior pastor I had spiritually abused others, too.



Source: Hersey and Blanchard 238.

**Figure 1. Johari window.**

The impetus for this dissertation has come from my experience of being spiritually abused in several congregations. One spiritual abuse experience occurred in a Christian church I attended for over twenty-five years, which taught the King Saul and young David model of leadership (before David was king). The Christian leaders used the Scripture in Psalm 105:15, “Do not touch my anointed ones, and do my prophets no harm” (NKJV), to discourage followers’ questions. My former church taught this leadership model because David said regarding King Saul in 1 Samuel 24:6, “The Lord forbid that I should do this thing to my master, the Lord’s anointed, to stretch out my hand against him, seeing [he is] the anointed of the Lord.” Therefore, the senior pastor is always the anointed oracle of God without question. I struggled with the King Saul and young David leadership model, but I was obedient.

As a management analyst, I was trained to problem solve by empowering individuals to take ownership of their solutions. I professionally and personally embraced collaborative leadership and believed in congregational ownership in decision making to foster shared vision. Finally, God gave me peace about leaving that church during a quarrelsome business meeting. A few years later, I was called to be the senior pastor of a small rural church without seeking the position. I was ordained while serving as the senior pastor. As a senior pastor, I applied organization development skills and practiced open two-way communication and collaborative leadership. I led the congregation from a place of self-awareness and self-knowledge learned from my own family of origin work. This pastoral experience was wonderful, successful, and a blessing.

Another spiritually abusive experience occurred while I was a paid full-time associate pastor on a multi-pastoral staff. Based on the research for this dissertation, I

have ascertained that my senior pastor was narcissistic, passive-aggressive, and compulsive. This senior pastor had a grandiose vision and on numerous occasions expressed, “I am going to be President of the United States one day.” Also, the senior pastor told the pastoral staff, “There is not an argument I can’t win!” The pastor had unresolved attachment issues because of being adopted and felt abandoned by the birth mother, which resulted in issues with females. This senior pastor wanted yes people as pastoral staff, which I was not.

After serving this congregation for seven years as an associate pastor, I resigned when God gave me release to leave the congregation. I was being undermined, blacklisted, ostracized, and labeled as not being a team player by senior leadership. I became an outcast. As a result of this experience and the research of this study, I discovered an important factor that played a significant role in my leadership as an associate pastor: Theory X and Theory Y personality types differ in the assumptions of people’s nature.

The Theory X and Theory Y personality types are assumptions about human nature and attitudes toward people. Also, Theory X and Theory Y consider how individuals lead followers differently (Hersey and Blanchard 48-50). Theory X leaders are more prone to abuse spiritually because they believe that other people must be closely controlled, dislike work, prefer to be directed, have little creativity, and are motivated by personal needs. Theory Y leaders assume that people have the capacity for creative problem solving, are self-directed, motivated to work, reliable, and interested in accepting responsibility (49). I held and practiced a Theory Y leadership style. When Christian leaders are functioning from different personality types and assumptions about



workers, they clash, which can result in spiritual abuse because they are not exercising the theory of primal leadership and emotional intelligence.

In the theory of primal leadership, the leader brings good feelings or emotions to those they lead. Emotional intelligence is being intelligent about emotions by using various competency skills to help people feel good (Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee 5). Over the years to understand myself better and to determine what has shaped me, I have done personal family of origin work, obtained grief counseling, and experienced group psychotherapy. Therefore, in writing this dissertation, I have firsthand knowledge of spiritual abuse in the Christian community as well as redeeming my dark side.

Most Christians hold a “common foundational belief that there is an undeniable biblical theme that God speaks to his people through designated spokes persons who then ought to be heeded” (Donnell 2). These spoke persons are Christian leaders presumed to be voices with heavenly authority. These voices of authority may speak as a prophet, preacher, or visionary. A Christian leader would say to followers that I am a visionary:

Thus saith the Lord [as your leader] I have been given the spiritual gift of leadership, and a vision by God for this congregation. Your appropriate response is to receive this Word, not reject [or question] it. If you reject [or question] it, you are rejecting [and questioning] me [your leader], rejecting [or questioning] the gift of leadership God has given the church, and rejecting [or questioning] the future God has in store for this congregation. (2)

The position of authority of an abusive Christian leader can be manipulative and coercive. Followers are made to feel fearful and outside of God's will if they do not accept the leader's vision.

The senior pastor declares a certain action must be taken without question because he or she has the vision and is the spokesperson for God, which is the King Saul and

David leadership model. Many followers are spiritually harmed by Christian leaders who rule over them rather than partner in ministry. The Christian leader is believed to be called and ordained by God to lead the congregation or religious organization but also has the potential to lead from their dark side and abuse followers spiritually. Joseph R.

Dongell explains how Christian leaders frequently preach in a manner, which declares them as prophets:

Thus saith the Lord, I'm telling you exactly what God has said in His Word we must do. It's right here in black and white. I'm just telling you what is there! (If you disagree with me [as a leader], you're disagreeing with God and his Word! [When Christian leaders speak as prophets, they are advocating.] Thus saith the Lord! I'm telling you what the Holy Spirit has impressed upon my Spirit. I've never felt it so clearly. (Ignore what the Christian leader is saying, and you're ignoring vital things God himself is saying.) (2)

Christian leaders who demand followers blindly accept their prophetic words without divine affirmation because great harm to the entire congregation and religious organization.

This study explored whether all Christian leaders truly speak for God or themselves. I acknowledge that the North American church paradigm has traditionally functioned in a hierarchical structure with ordained clergy in leadership. When Christian leaders demand respect and control of all decision making for the organization by belittling, ostracizing, and condemning followers who want to consider different ideas, options, and alternatives, the leader's actions become spiritually abusive. The practice of followers being tricked, coerced, and shamed into an action or inaction that benefits the leader at the followers' detriment is an unsettling dark side of Christian leadership behavior called spiritual abuse.

This dissertation sought to understand the phenomenon of spiritual abuse and focused on Protestant Christian leaders who spiritually abuse their followers. Some Christian leaders spiritually abuse followers knowingly and unknowingly causing great harm. A difficult aspect of spiritual abuse is accepting that it exists. Spiritual abuse occurs more frequently than the average person realizes and the Christian leader acknowledges.

### **The Purpose**

The purpose of this study was to evaluate a newly developed spiritual abuse curriculum through quantitative and qualitative measures. The spiritual abuse curriculum raised the cognitive level of spiritual abuse in the Christian community.

### **Research Questions**

Research questions for this study were as follows.

#### **Research Question #1**

What was the knowledge and attitude of Christian leaders in regard to spiritual abuse?

#### **Research Question #2**

How did Christian leaders change in their knowledge, attitude, and behavior about spiritual abuse through the implementation of a spiritual abuse curriculum?

#### **Research Question #3**

How effective was the teaching of the spiritual abuse curriculum?

### **Definition of Terms**

Important terms used throughout this study are defined as the following

## **Spiritual Abuse**

Two psychologists created the best definition for spiritual abuse. “Spiritual abuse is the mistreatment of a follower who is in need of help, support, or greater spiritual empowerment with the result in the weakening, undermining, or decreasing of that person’s spiritual empowerment” (Johnson and VanVonderen 20). Spiritual abuse occurs when clergy or lay leaders, as persons of authority, distort the truth or use manipulation, intimidation, control, shame, guilt, fear, trickery, or coercion for personal gain at the followers’ expense in order to satisfy their own needs.

## **Christian Community**

Christian community has been used to designate those Protestant denominations, nondenominational congregations, religious organizations, or Christian ministries requiring leadership in clergy and laity for teaching, counseling, and caring for followers, believers, and patients.

## **Protestant Christian Leaders**

Seminarians are Protestant Christian leaders preparing for paid and volunteer Christian ministry. Christian leaders include spiritual leaders, elders, deacons, board chairs, and laity in leadership positions. These Christian leaders’ ministry positions were unpaid, paid, full-time, part-time, and bi-vocational. When the term Christian leader is used in this dissertation it refers to *Protestant Christian leaders*.

## **Dark Side**

The dark side is the natural human lifetime development of inner urges, motivations, compulsions, and personality dysfunctions that frequently go unexamined or remain unknown to a person. It is labeled the dark side because it is a part of an

individual and to some degree lurking in the shadows of their personality until an emotional explosion or major problem causes them to search for a reason why.

Personalities have been slowly intermingled with examples, experiences, expectations, and emotions since childhood, thus creating their dark side (McIntosh and Rima 28-29).

The dark side becomes spiritual abuse when behaviors are acted out and not corrected.

### **Toxic Faith**

Toxic faith is a belief system. Toxic faith is a defective faith that distorts and taints one's view of God. Faith becomes toxic when individuals use God or religion for personal gain in profit, power, pleasure, or prestige (Arterburn and Felton 31).

### **Ministry Intervention**

The intervention involved teaching and evaluating a newly created spiritual abuse curriculum developed to aid Christian leaders in becoming more cognizant of spiritual abuse in the Christian community.

### **Context of Study**

This dissertation assisted Christian leaders to prepare for and function in healthy ministries through experiencing the spiritual abuse curriculum about the dark side of leadership, character, personality, family systems, and godly leadership. Many Christian leaders lead in a devastating and unhealthy manner within the Christian community, causing great harm to followers.

This dissertation presented insights into spiritual abuse, the type of leader who is more prone to abuse spiritually, and ways to overcome and correct this destructive behavior. Christian leaders in every facet and capacity of ministry whether small or

megachurch, rural or urban ministry, or specialized ministries in hospitals, jails, or colleges would greatly benefit from this spiritual abuse curriculum.

A common tactic of Christian leaders that spiritually abuse others is to use Scripture to attack and control their followers. Therefore, in this study I intentionally presented a balanced view of Scripture using the New International Version (NIV) unless noted otherwise. John 16:13 says, “But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth.” A deep hope is that this study offered in Christian love will shine God’s light of truth onto the Christian leaders’ pathway, and the Christian leaders will walk in God’s truth.

### **Methodology**

This study is a mixed method nonexperimental explanatory design consisting of two phases—quantitative followed by qualitative. A mixed method design was employed because “by mixing the data sets, the researcher provided a better understanding of the problem than if either dataset had been used alone (Creswell and Clark 7).

I believe that a “combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches provides a better understanding of research problems than either approach alone” (Creswell and Clark 8). I designed a longitudinal panel pretest and posttest survey that was used to evaluate the newly developed spiritual abuse curriculum. The survey documented the change in knowledge, in attitude and opinion, and in behavior of participants regarding spiritual abuse.

Conceptually, the explanatory process is divided into two phases. Phase One collected quantitative data after the intervention, which was teaching the spiritual abuse curriculum. Phase Two is the second data collection and analysis, which were personal

interviews that built on the initial Phase One results. The same participants were sampled in Phase One and Phase Two.

### **Participants**

A sample size of fifty Christian leaders was the goal of this study. Some Christian leaders were preparing for Christian ministry in seminary classes at Anderson University School of Theology (AUSOT). Seminarians were Christian leader students enrolled in an accredited seminary seeking personal growth and further preparation for Christian ministry.

I purposively selected academia to evaluate this newly created spiritual abuse curriculum because the seminary environment is conducive for learning and developing Christian leaders of today and the future. After further consideration following my dissertation proposal hearing, the Asbury Theological Seminary (ATS) proposal hearing committee and I believed the study needed to be expanded to include a congregation's involvement and perspective on spiritual abuse.

The selection of a Church of God (CHOG) (Anderson) occurred after the senior pastor invited me to teach my spiritual abuse curriculum to church leaders. Some of these participants were employed full-time, part-time, bi-vocational, or volunteer Christian leaders. The participants in both the seminary and congregation were male and female, of various ages and church affiliations, and at different levels of Christian experience.

### **Instrumentation**

I constructed a Protestant Christian leader survey with a bias toward Christian leaders to answer the research questions (see Appendix A). I designed a survey from the literature review to measure (1) the knowledge and attitude of Christian leaders with

regard to spiritual abuse and (2) if the Christian leaders changed in their knowledge, their attitude, and their behavior regarding spiritual abuse after experiencing the spiritual abuse curriculum.

The survey was administered prior to the intervention of the spiritual abuse curriculum. The same survey was readministered two weeks after the intervention. I utilized a Likert scale to measure the effectiveness of the curriculum.

The survey measured three aspects of the participants: the changed scores in knowledge, in attitude and opinion, and in behavior of the participants in regards to spiritual abuse. The pretest established the beginning level of participants' knowledge, and the posttest evaluated the spiritual abuse curriculum intervention. The semi-structured interviews occurred two months after the spiritual abuse curriculum intervention.

### **Independent Variables**

The independent variable was the spiritual abuse curriculum (see Appendix B). I developed the spiritual abuse curriculum from the literature review. The premise of this study was that the information disseminated to and appropriated by participants about spiritual abuse in this curriculum would raise the Christian leaders' consciousness and reduce the occurrence of spiritual abuse.

### **Dependent Variables**

The dependent variables were the changes in the participants' knowledge, attitudes and opinions, and behavior regarding spiritual abuse as a result of the independent variable. The researcher-designed survey provided the means to measure these changes.



### **Intervening Variables**

The intervening variables were church affiliations, gender, age, and years of Christian ministry experience. Christian ministry statuses such as commissioned, licensed, ordained, part-time, full-time, and bi-vocational were also intervening variables. The participants' faith tradition was an intervening variable as well. Another intervening variable was the teacher and teaching style. The participants' learning style was also a factor.

### **Scale of Measurement**

The scale of measurement was defined prior to any measurements and observations were accomplished. This study used a Likert typed scale that provided an interval scale of measurement for twenty-nine questions, fifteen demographic questions, and one open-ended question (Wiersma and Jurs 323). Each item has a set of responses on a five-point scale assigned numerical values ranging from 1 to 5. The five-point scale ranged as follows: strongly disagree—1, disagree—2, uncertain—3, agree—4, and strongly agree—5.

### **Data Collection**

In the spring 2009, I selected the participants from classes at AUSOT. The three classes were (1) THST 7340, Ethics for the Vocation of Ministry; (2) PAST 5450, Foundation of Pastoral Ministry; and, (3) PAST 7470, Leadership. A CHOG congregation was selected.

### **Data Analysis**

In order to protect the psychological well-being of the participants, the data collection process used an electronic anonymous survey. In order to remain anonymous

in the data analysis, the participants provided the last four digits of their AUSOT student number and the CHOG leaders provided the last four digits of their social security numbers.

I engaged a statistician to run a t-test on the data to answer the research questions. I explored the results with a data consultant.

### **Delimitations and Generalizability**

The focus of this study was intentionally limited to Protestant Christian leaders in the North America ministry context. Catholic clergy were deliberately excluded because the focus of this work was not sexual abuse. The change in understanding attitudes regarding spiritual abuse is based on past experience and new exposure to the subject of spiritual abuse. A limitation of this study was the inadequate time lapse to document behavior change in the participants. Another limitation of this study was the participants' self-reporting.

### **Theological Foundation**

Spiritual abuse is not a new phenomenon, but it is a dynamic that has been around since the beginning of human interactions. A troubling aspect is how leaders utilize spiritual abuse, cloaking the abuse in Scripture to justify their ungodly practices and eliminate their personal conviction. One of the goals of this study was to inspire Christian leaders to live out Paul's advice in Philippians 4:8: "Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable if anything is excellent or praiseworthy, think about such things." Believers must take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ (Anderson, Zuehlke, and Zuehlke 107).

Jesus warned his disciples about the yeast of the Pharisees that leavens the entire loaf of bread in Matthew 16:6-11. Therefore, Jewish religious leaders should not have been allowed to tempt and confuse followers. Jude is a letter of great significance because he spoke directly and profoundly to the false teachers among the Israelites. Jude instructed the people of God how to handle the false teachers and increase their faith with God. Jude took up the cry of Ezekiel 34 a thousand years later.

The book of Matthew, chapter 23, records as Jesus spoke to the Jewish religious leaders called Pharisees. Jesus directly confronted the Pharisees as perpetrators of spiritual abuse many times. Jesus was not at odds with sinners but at odds with the religious leaders of the spiritual system who were wounding people (Johnson and VanVonderen 29). According to Edward J. Cummings, Matthew 23 identifies twelve aspects of spiritual abuse as authoritarianism, classism, terrorism, legalism, and intimidation, condemnation, manipulation, isolation, as well as coercion, conformity, irrationality, and ensnarement (4-5). Matthew 23 is applicable to Christian leaders today in the twenty-first century.

Genealogies were very significant in biblical times. Matthew made important claims about the ancestry of Jesus to prove him as the Messiah, using a linear pattern. The book of Matthew gives an account of Jesus' life story especially his ministry, giving the book a Christological emphasis. The Matthew birth narratives served Christological purposes. Matthew 23 relates to the whole canon by going to the heart of salvation. The book of Matthew was written for Jewish people perhaps in an urban environment (Nolland 18-19). The book of Matthew was written after AD 70, the fall of Jerusalem coming between AD 80 and AD 90 (2).

Matthew 23 is known as the *Seven Woes of Jesus*, but more importantly Jesus profoundly condemned the Pharisees publicly. The instructions and warnings of Jesus in Matthew 23 have many applications. Jesus was filled with holy indignation and confronted the scribes and Pharisees through eight woes because their lives did not depict the entire law of God and godly living.

Jesus called the scribes and Pharisees blind guides, fools, snakes, and hypocrites because they were prideful and heaped unnecessary burdens of traditional law upon God's people and they were not concerned about the well-being of the whole person. Scribes and Pharisees were more concerned about notoriety, being in a position of importance portrayed by the extravagant garments they wore, and desiring acknowledgement in public as Rabbi.

### **Overview of Study**

Chapter 2 of this study is the literature review of servant leadership, abuse of power, family systems theory, congregational systems theory, primal leadership theory, primal leadership theory, and the dark side of leadership theory, toxic faith system, as well as a biblical framework of spiritual abuse. Chapter 3, methodology, is the research design of this study. The reports of the research findings are included in Chapter 4. Finally, Chapter 5 provides the discussion of this study as well as suggestions for Christian leaders to avoid spiritual abuse.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE**

This literature review considered the spiritual abuse phenomenon through Scripture, family systems theory, congregational theory, toxic faith system, the dark side of Christian leadership, and personality disorders that interact as components of spiritual abuse.

#### **Purpose**

The purpose of this dissertation was to create curriculum for the study of spiritual abuse and to evaluate its effectiveness for current and potential Christian leaders in order to help them become cognizant of spiritual abuse in the Christian community.

#### **Theoretical Framework**

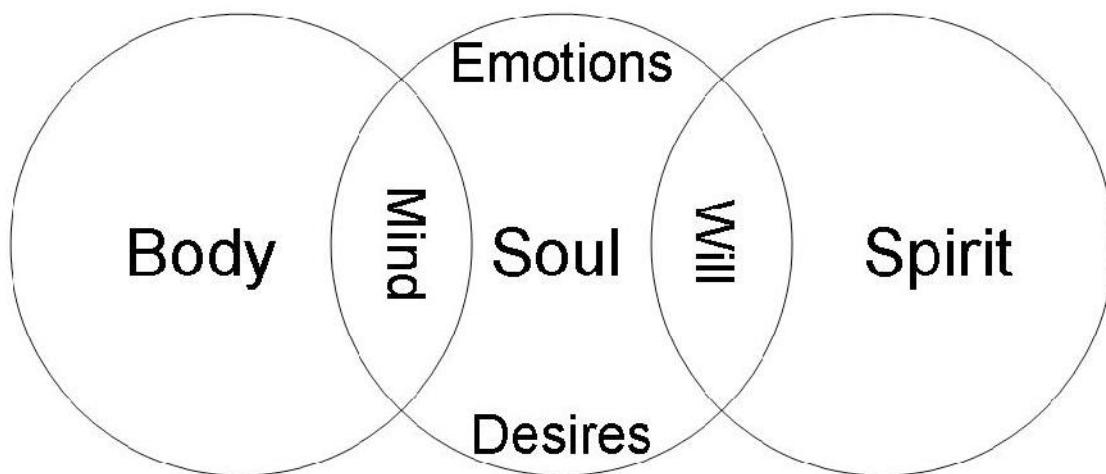
The phenomenon of spiritual abuse occurs across world religions more frequently than is acknowledged and is a critical aspect of religious leadership. The product of ungodly religious leadership has emotionally and sometimes physically crippled souls trying to survive an emotional process of destruction.

Deep personal change of Christian leaders who abuse spiritually is the goal of this study. Deep personal change means choosing life over meaninglessness and slow death of self (Quinn xi ii). Deep personal change can happen only if Christian leaders are willing to enter the unknown and confront the wicked problems they encounter.

Deep change can occur at two levels: (1) organizational and (2) personal (Quinn 4). Deep change requires new ways of thinking, behaving, and leading. In order to effect change in others, change must first occur in Christian leaders and in their relationship with others (11).

Deep personal change is not small incremental change because incremental change means the person is in control. “Making a deep personal change involves abandoning both [knowledge and competence] and ‘walking naked into the land of the uncertainty’” (Quinn 3). Deep personal change requires taking risks. “To make deep personal change is to develop a new paradigm, a new self, one that is more effectively aligned with today’s realities” (9). Christian leaders can change the world for Christ by positively changing themselves, by the leading of the Holy Spirit, and by the mercy of God (9). Some Christian leaders need to seek specialized counseling.

This study attempted to integrate biblical, spiritual, and psychological aspects of Christian leaders who spiritually abuse their followers. The use of biblical, spiritual, and psychological intervention is a holistic way to bring about healing and positive change in Christian leaders because each individual was created with a spirit, soul, and body. The soul is the seat of humans’ mind, will, emotions, and desires (see Figure 2).



**Figure 2. Totality of humans.**

However, some people may not be believers, yet others have been deeply hurt by spiritual leaders in the past. Therefore, “it can take months to overcome the spiritual damage inflicted by church leaders and to prepare those who have been abused to receive Christian counsel” in the Christian community (Anderson, Zuehlke, and Zuehlke 83). In essence, treatment of spiritual abuse requires a specialized counselor who uses biblical strategy for therapy when appropriate.

### **Biblical Examples of Spiritual Abuse**

Subtle spiritual abuse is just as harmful as blatant and is often overlooked. An example of subtle spiritual abuse is inaction, which is spiritual abuse of neglect. In Acts 7:54 and 22:19, Saul, a Jew, a Roman citizen, a Pharisee, was given written authority by the Jewish religious leaders to persecute Christians in the early Church. Saul travelled from place to place hunting and persecuting Christian believers. The religious leaders became manipulative and cunning towards Stephen, one of the seven selected deacons, who was full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom. Saul orchestrated the demise of Stephen by encouraging a group of men to bring false witness against Stephen. Saul was present at the stoning of Stephen and did nothing to prevent his death. This plot to kill Stephen was a form of spiritual abuse, neglect.

Another example is King Saul's jealousy and fear of young David's popularity with the people and the favor of God. King Saul tried to kill David numerous times and was obsessed in the pursuit of young David (1 Sam. 18:1-11; 19). King Saul in his search for young David killed all the priests of Nob and their families (1 Sam. 22:11-19). King Saul remained David's enemy until his death.

The most disturbing biblical example of spiritual abusers is Matthew 7:15, which says, “Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves” among the flock of the Good Shepherd in the Christian community. Paul also warns Christians in Acts 20:28-30 to be watchful :

Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. So be on your guard.

Some people in a community of faith distort the truth to steal souls away from God.

Information disseminated about spiritual abuse in this curriculum hopefully will decrease the occurrence of spiritual abuse. This study endeavored to present to Christian leaders how to identify and cease spiritual abuse in the Christian community. The creation of a spiritual abuse curriculum would greatly enhance the cognizance and avoidance of spiritual abuse in the Christian community as well as empower the people of God to overcome such harmful behavior.

### **Spiritual Abuse Phenomenon**

David Johnson and Jeff Van Vonderen identify what spiritual abuse is not:

1. It is not when a spiritual leader, who has the responsibility to make final decisions, uses his/her best judgment and chooses to go against your opinion. It is abusive, however, if someone’s opposing view is used to devalue a person’s spirituality.
2. It is not abusive when a Christian (whether or not they are a leader) confront another Christian because of sin, wrongdoing, or even honest mistakes that must be corrected. The objective, of course, is not to shame or discredit, but to heal, save and restore.
3. Likewise, it is not abusive when a person in ministry or leadership is asked to step down from their position because of emotional, physical, and mental or spiritual problems. The goal, however, must be on helping the individual to receive help, so as to eventually return to their office or position if that is the best action.



4. It is not spiritually abusive or inappropriate to disagree, whether on doctrines or other issues, even in public. Keep in mind, though, that it is always crucial to maintain respect and never to belittle or attack.
5. It is not abusive to hold to a certain standards of group conduct (like style of dress). It becomes abusive when others are spiritually degraded or shamed because they did not maintain the same convictions. (24)

Not all strong Christian leaders are abusive, nor are all spiritual systems abusive. A healthy spiritual system can unintentionally treat people in hurtful ways. Christian leaders' views and concepts of authority and submission in Christian ministry are important and must be reviewed.

### **Authority and Submission**

Christian leaders' theology of spiritual authority and submission is important. Romans 13:1 states about authority, "For there is no authority except that which God has established." In Matthew 28:18, Jesus said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me." Matthew 10:1 proclaims that Jesus "called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority." Christian leaders are not given authority by being hired or elected to a Christian leadership position. God gives authority for the purpose of building up and equipping the body of Christ.

In regards to obedience and submission to leadership, Romans 13:1 says, "Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God." God endows divine authority to Christian leaders who seek to glorify him. First Peter 5:5 says, "Likewise you younger people submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another and be clothed with humility." First Peter 5:5 gives explicit instructions to the young to submit and respect their elders. Also, all believers are to submit to those in authority as well as to exhibit humility. Hebrews 13:17 states emphatically, "Obey your leaders and submit to them." However, to bring balance to

these Scriptures, one must consider the words of Peter and other apostles in Acts 5:29, which declares, “We must obey God rather than men,” a statement Peter made to the religious leaders he was disobeying. If obedience is taken out of context, obedience to leaders sounds like good theology. However, add the larger context and only submit to leadership when their authority is from God and their stance is consistent with God’s.

A key element of submission is vulnerability:

Vulnerability does not mean transparency. Transparency is simply disclosing yourself to others at times and in ways that you choose. Although transparency is a good start, in vulnerability you deliberately place yourself under others’ influence, submitting yourself to others’ strengths. You give others the right to know the pain of your weaknesses and to care for you. You choose to let others know you, to have access to your life, to teach you, and to influence you. In part, this true vulnerability is what the Bible means when it speaks of submission. Submission is a love word, not a control word. Submission means letting someone love you, teach you, or influence you. Submission goes hand and hand with vulnerability. (Thrall, McNicol, and McElrath 81)

True vulnerability helps to show that Christian leaders’ lives are open books. It conveys that Christian leaders are teachable and the wounds in Christian leaders’ lives are seen as filled. The process openly reveals Christian leader’s integrity and sustains one’s integrity (82).

Vulnerability triggers two relational effects of authenticity: (1) Followers are able to gain access to their Christian leaders’ lives as the leader submit to the followers’ influence, and (2) in turn, Christian leaders are given access to the followers’ lives as trust is earned and the followers witness the Christian leaders’ lives opening to them (Thrall, McNicol, and McElrath 82). Followers are vulnerable to the way leaders communicate visions, philosophies, and interpretation of events because they see their Christian leaders as parental figures (Sankowsky 59).

Vulnerability leads Christian leaders into some dangerous places. “The top-down, pyramid-shaped, power-based leadership model can crush vulnerability” (Thrall, McNicol, and McElrath 87). Vulnerability is being unguarded, unsafe, defenseless, naked, and susceptible before God. It allows God to perform deep changes in those dangerous places, such as deepening Christian leaders’ integrity, expanding their areas of influence, and showing God’s protection of Christian leaders (84). Christian leaders are fearful of showing their vulnerability because they do not want to be perceived as weak or incompetent. “Such invulnerable leadership models, along with the unhealthy isolation engendered by their lack of trust, always creates an environment in which character development is at risk” (87). Christian leaders are intentionally to seek personal and community vulnerability in order to grow.

### **Godly Leadership**

Numerous definitions for leadership were considered. For example, “[l]eadership is the first and foremost a relationship between two people” (Wright 30). Leadership is also defined as “a relationship of influence—a transforming relationship in which the leader invests in the growth and development of the followers, empowering them to become what God has gifted them to be” (44). The action of spiritual abuse is the opposite of godly leadership, which is not developing and empowering followers to honor and glorify God. “Leadership is about leaving your comfort zone and taking a risk to engage those around you” (24). Genuine biblical leadership is a Spirit-led life.

Christian leader definitions are numerous. The most powerful and positive leader is exemplified in Jesus. “Biblical leadership is a relationship—a long-term relationship modeled on God’s patient working out of His purpose in our lives. Leadership is a

relationship that cares enough to walk patiently with people towards a shared purpose” (Wright 147-48). Christian leaders are encouraged to be examples of how to walk patiently with others in ministry.

First Peter 5:2-3, gives Christian leaders instructions about being good shepherds:

Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, serving as overseers not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.

When Christian leaders demand to be viewed as rulers and authoritarians over every aspect of the followers’ life including whom to marry, when to have children, and where to work, these actions are forms of control and are characteristics of a spiritually abusive system. To lord over someone means to subject him or her to your power. It implies that someone is the master and someone is the subject as exemplified in Hitler (Kouzes and Posner, *Christian Reflections* 103). No Christian leader wants to be like Hitler; therefore, he or she would be wise to strive diligently to accomplish leadership through servanthood.

### **Servant Leadership**

Servant leadership is an essential characteristic of an authentic Christian leader. “Leadership for Christians starts with a vital relationship between the leader and God. This is the essence of Christian servanthood, servant leadership, which is a continuous process” (Wright 7). Servant leadership is paramount in effectively serving in the Christian community: “Servant leadership is about a relationship with God that so shapes who we are that people see in us a person of character and commitment whose influence they choose to follow” (12). In simplest terms, servant leadership is caring for others over

self-preservation, which is a sign of true Christian leadership (Kouzes and Posner, *Christian Reflections* 103).

Submission to God and to the divine call on one's life is the first step in servant leadership. In order to become a servant leader, one must become a servant to the leader (i.e., Jesus Christ; Wilkes 22-23). Christian leaders are to be servants and stewards of God because they have been given the responsibility to help and guide the people of God. Biblical modes of supervision can be found in Philippians 1:9-11, 2 Peter 1:5-8, and Titus.

Christian leaders need to know their character strengths, weaknesses, values, and beliefs and be led by the Holy Spirit to meet the needs of their followers. Servant leadership is a calling for every believer. "Servant leadership is passionate service to the mission and to those who join the leader on that mission" (Wilkes 19). Christian leadership is a call to service. Seven observations describe how Jesus led as a servant and how healthy Christian leaders emulate Jesus (see Table 1).

**Table 1. Servant Leadership Principles**

<b>Jesus</b>	<b>Christian Leaders</b>
1. Jesus humbled himself and allowed God to exalt him.	1. Humble your heart (Luke 14:7-11).
2. Jesus completed his Father's will rather than seeking a position	2. First be a follower in the Christian community of Christ rather than seeking a position (Mark 10:32-40).
3. Jesus defined greatness as being a servant and being first as becoming a slave.	3. Find greatness in service (Mark 10:45).
4. Jesus risked serving others b/c he trusted that he was God's son.	4. Take risks (John 13:3).
5. Jesus left his place at the head of the table to serve the needs of others.	5. Take up the towel of servanthood (John 13:4-11).
6. Jesus shared responsibility and authority with those he called to lead.	6. Share responsibility and authority (Acts 6:16).
7. Jesus built a team to carry out a worldwide vision.	7. Build a team.

Source: Wilkes 11-12, 25-27.

A major principle of servant leadership is to move beyond the head table mentality. The myth about sitting at the head table is that those who sit at the head table are better than those who clean the house or serve in the kitchen (Wilkes 13):

“Leadership begins when a God-revealed mission captures a person” (19). For Christian leaders, the most important issue in ministry is submission to Jesus as Lord of all, and a personal relationship with God is central to this dissertation.

The service-oriented leadership model shows that “the pendulum has swung from personality-centered leadership to character-based leadership” (Wilkes 15). True servant leadership begins when Christian leaders humble themselves to carry out the mission God has entrusted to them rather than their own personal agenda (18). Jesus considered his disciples servants until close to the end of his ministry when he called them friends: “No longer do I [Jesus] call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is

doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you” (John 15:5). Two important aspects of Jesus are: (1) he developed such a relationship with his twelve disciples that he called them friend, and (2) in teaching and instructing his disciples, Jesus shared all the knowledge his Father gave him. Jesus did not withhold from his disciples even though they did not understand at the time (Fernando 132).

The best leadership style or stimulus does not exist. A situational approach to leadership evaluates the response or the results rather than the stimulus (Hersey and Blanchard 97). Any leadership style can be effective or ineffective depending on response in a particular situation (102). Situational leadership uses the four leadership styles of telling, selling, participating, and delegating, along with maturity of followers (155-56).

Successful Christian leaders do many things:

[They] create a learning culture that provides a forum for risk, novelty, experimentation, and a challenge that redirects and personalizes learning. We must create learning communities for learners of all ages that can give power, time and voice to their inquiry and their creativity. (Cladis 148)

Developing a community of learning where followers are encouraged in a safe environment to be creative is commendable.

The best definition for leadership in the Christian context “is the exercise of one’s spiritual gifts under the call of God to serve a certain group of people in achieving the goals God has given them toward the end of glorifying Christ” (Gangel 31). In this study, Kenneth O. Gangel’s definition of leadership is embraced. Gangel’s definition embodies six primary tasks for leaders (1) relating, (2) organizing, (3) achieving, (4) thinking, (5) envisioning, and (6) enduring with their followers (31-33). Leadership has to do with the

way leaders treat people, develop people, and relate to people. Leadership is a learned behavior.

Christian leaders are called to examine and evaluate how they lead, why they lead, and the best way to lead by giving of themselves to help others reach their potential in Christ. Seven recognizable essentials for encouraging the hearts of people that are learnable and repeatable actions are

1. Set clear standards,
2. Expect the best,
3. Pay attention,
4. Personalize recognition,
5. Tell the story,
6. Celebrate together, and
7. Set the example. (Kouzes and Posner, *Encouraging the Heart* 18)

These various essentials are imperative in encouraging the hearts of God's people.

Credibility is paramount in Christian leadership. "Credibility is the foundation of leadership," which is identified as the "first law of leadership" (Kouzes and Posner, *Encouraging the Heart* 131). In other words, credible Christian leaders are trustworthy and honest. (132-33). Most importantly, credible leaders set clear standards. They inform all of the values that are expected to be accomplished, and they are rewarded by giving genuine personalized recognition in various creative forms such as giving awards, telling stories, and celebrating by setting the example (29).

Unhealthy Christian leaders seek various ways to obtain control over their followers. Healthy "spiritual leadership is based on the work of the Holy Spirit on spiritual character. Some leaders realize that position alone does not automatically bring them authority" over their followers (Blackaby and Blackaby 88-89). The conscious effort of unhealthy Christian leaders trying to gain authority and influence turns to



obsession. Clearly, “position, power, and personality are all misconceived sources of influence for leaders” because “some Christian leaders pursue influence over their people by using force and manipulation” (93). Motivation and manipulation are different. Unfortunately, Christian leaders use motivation as the way to make people do things or perhaps make them want to do things that they think the follower ought to do, which is manipulation. Such insidious bullying carries with it even more disastrous consequences such as spiritual abuse (88-89). Healthy Christian leaders produce healthy followers.

Two aspects of manipulation are, first, to maneuver people into positions that are not good for them usually without their knowing and, second, to do something that has a predictable effect (McLemore 263). Manipulation is spiritual abuse.

Godly leadership is vital to successful Christian. The theology of leadership requires leaders to have a vertical relationship with God and a horizontal relationship with others. The Holy Spirit guides Christian leaders in the gift of spiritual discernment.

### **Spiritual Discernment**

Spiritual discernment is vital in godly leadership. Discernment does not always produce a clear direction in one's Christian journey (Johnson and Dreitzer 106).

Nevertheless, discernment in the Christian tradition is more than making a decision:

“Christian discernment seeks a sense of the presence of God in exploring alternatives.

Prayer lies at the heart of Christian discernment” (99). Prayer and discernment are essential for healthy Christian leaders:

Congregations are calling upon their pastors and lay leaders for a kind of ministry that their leaders have not previously considered or been equipped for. Effective leaders in today's church are being called upon to engage persons in their journey and speak with them about the issues of living in the presence of Christ. (84)

The primary purpose of discernment is to make Christian leaders increasingly available and in tune with God over the course of their lives as they deliberately submit their hard choices to God's love. Like other spiritual practices, discernment results in an ever deepening relationship with Christ and an ever clearer understanding of who Christians are in the sight of God (100).

Spiritual discernment is a lifelong process of developing a personal relationship with God, which is identified by milestones along the way. Discernment involves five elements. A brief overview of discernment elements are

1. Studying, praying, and interpreting the Old and New Testaments;
2. Having wisdom of past Christians to inform discernment;
3. Seeking help from another Christian as a prayer partner;
4. Listening to the movement of God within one's own soul; and,
5. Helping through their experience of the culture in which one lives (Johnson and Dreitcer 104-05).

Christian leaders who spiritually abuse practice escapist spirituality and find a way to bend the rules to shift the blame on others or twist an interpretation of a situation so that they are exempted from responsible behavior (Johnson and Dreitcer 3). Too many Christian leaders use excuses saying, "I was made this way and I can't do anything about it" (4). These Christian leaders are rejecting God's will in order to do their own will. "This veering away from God's will and seeking to claim our own will reaches far back into the human story and is buried deep within each of our psyches" (4). This type of thinking and Christian leader behavior is no excuse for ignoring God's will.

At the core of spirituality is a yearning for God, which drives Christians to explore the dark corners of their lives; and to pull into the light all the stuff that they have carefully hidden for years (Johnson and Dreitcer 9). In essence, in an effort to avoid spiritually abusing followers, all Christian leaders must seek a spirituality grounded in, informed by the example of Jesus, and empowered by his living presence (15).

Christian leaders who seek God's presence in their lives through Scripture can turn to the ancient practice called *lectio divina*, which will both heal and transform the Christian leaders' leadership (Johnson and Dreitcer 45). "Lectio was first practiced by the hermits in the Egyptian desert while they sat by their cells weaving mats. The method was further developed in the monasteries of the West" (41). Briefly, the five movements of *lectio divina* are: read the text, ruminate on it, meditate on it, pray to God about it, and contemplate it. *Lectio divina* is a studied silence in the presence of God (42). "*Lectio divina* (sacred reading) is a pattern of attentive, silent Scripture reading that dates back to the early centuries after Christ" (Baab 66).

Spiritual abuse occurs through a wide range of situations, from rarely abusive to extremely legalistic mind control, excommunication, and deaths such as the case with Jim Jones and the People's Temple in Ghana. Spiritual abuse is extremely multilayered.

### **Humility**

*Webster's Dictionary for Students* defines humility as, "(1) Not bold or proud: modest; (2) Expressing, a spirit of respect of the wishes of another; and (3) Low in rank or condition" ("Humility"). Humility is a noteworthy trait to possess in Christian leadership. "Humility is the hallmark of the spiritual leader" (Sanders 61). A leader's humility would grow with the passing of years as Paul advanced in the grace of humility

(61). “Humility is the key to learning, and leaders who are servants humbly admit that they do not even know half of the answers” (Finzel 279). Every Christian leader must have the characteristic of humility.

One very important perspective of leadership is humility and should be taught to all Christian leaders. “The key to a servant leader’s heart is humility. People with humility don’t think less of themselves; they just think of themselves less” (Kouzes and Posner, *Christian Reflections* 104). The behavior of self-serving Christian leaders is they look in the mirror and see themselves as perfect.

The heart and spirit of a Christian leader is important. Behavior comes from the heart and the spirit is empowered by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit endows Christian leaders with divine wisdom when they are humble. Scripture tells the believer in 1 Peter 5:5-6, “All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another because God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.” Humility is the absence of pride and the wisdom of God. Faithful humble servants of God will be raised to a higher position in God’s time. Proverbs 11:2-3 expresses, “When pride comes, then comes disgrace but with humility comes wisdom. The integrity of the upright guides them, but the unfaithful are destroyed by their duplicity.” Genuine humility includes the trait of integrity. The process of obtaining genuine humility is having confidence in God and not self. Proverbs continues in 15:33 saying, “The fear of the Lord teaches a man wisdom, and humility comes before honor.” The fear of God and faith in God are essential to be a godly leader. Great leaders lead their followers through faithful vows to God. Proverbs 16:5 states, “The Lord detests all the proud of heart.” The darkness of pride comes in

many forms such as egotism and jealousy, but spiritual pride in spiritual gifts and leadership positions detracts from glorifying God (Sanders 154). As Christian leaders rise in position, a prideful nature can develop, and if this type of character is not brought in line with Scripture (153) spiritual abuse occurs.

Sometimes leaders knowingly hide false humility in the term servanthood while treating the body of Christ harshly and lack value in restraining sensual indulgence (Col. 2:23). Abusive leaders lack humility and the spirit of servanthood.

False humility is deceitfulness. False humility is described in Colossians 2:18:

Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and worship of angels disqualify you for the prize such a person goes into great detail about what he has seen and his unspiritual mind puffs him up with idle notions.

Christian leaders are to identify and avoid false humility. The spirit of discernment can identify false humility no matter how Christian leaders present themselves on the outside.

Colossians 3:12 continues, "Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience."

Compassion, humility, gentleness identifies the kind of Christian leader God is calling. In the Christian community, relationships are vital. The Christian leader must have a positive relationship with God and his or her followers. "The spiritual leader must be sincere in promise, faithful in discharge of duty, upright in finances, loyal in service, and honest in speech" (Sanders 62). Christian leaders need to be reminded that personal integrity is key to being a godly leader, realizing Christ came into the world to save sinners (1 Tim. 1:15; Sanders 61-62).

The lack of humility is ego. Unchecked egos are detrimental to effective servant leadership. "EGO stands for edging God out" (Kouzes and Posner, *Christian Reflections*

115). Some Christian leaders succumb to their ego-driven and self-serving attitudes. “God is spelled E-G-O or God. It is your choice. Leaders without Jesus can serve only themselves as master, no matter how they think they are being great servants” (Wilkes 55). A common mistake of Christian leaders is embracing their E-G-O to upstage God and using their personal agendas to guide them.

Another aspect of servanthood is the correct use of authority, where Christian leadership authority comes from, “that our commitment is not to a authority but to the truth that is in Jesus” (Fernando 126). Leadership in the church is derived from the Scriptures on which Christian leaders base their message, their call received from God to preach the Word, and from the Holy Spirit who anoints Christian leaders to preach (126-30). Biblical leadership results from the divine appointment of women and men.

### **Abuse of Power**

Christian leadership’s abuse of power is a layer of spiritual abuse. “Power is often defined as the capacity for one social unit (e.g. leader) to determine the behavior of another (e.g. followers)” (Sankowsky 59). This definition of power specifically warns Christian leaders to be cautious in the area of power:

Power is a complex term with personal, social, and religious connotations. At a personal level, all persons have some power by virtue of being alive, along with an inner drive to use this power to become all they can be. Some are denied the chance to exercise their power because of oppression. Others use their power for destructive ends. Society dictates how power is distributed. (Poling 12)

The focus of this study was to review power used for destructive ends. Corruption of power is abuse of power.

Power in its ideal form is the energy of life itself as it is organized into the relational web that includes us all. This primal relational power is distorted through human sin by individuals and societies into abuse of power and is the cause of much human suffering. Through resistance to the abuse of

power and the work of God's love in Jesus Christ, the human spirit is made resilient. (33)

The abuse of power is more prevalent than Christian leaders acknowledge.

Abuse of power is a form of spiritual abuse and is evil. "Abuse of power occurs when a leader acts in a manner that manipulates an area of control for personal gain at the followers' expense—all the while avoiding basic managerial responsibility. Intention may or may not be present" (Sankowsky 61). Abuse of power is motivated by fear and by the Christian leader's deep desire to control the power of life (Poling 27).

### **Symbolic Status**

A closer look at abuse of power as a special kind of power is identified as symbolic status. Symbolic status is a psychological phenomenon where followers tacitly regard their Christian leaders as parent figures. Symbolic status tends to be more pronounced with charismatic leaders (Sankowsky 57).

In this dissertation, psychology alone is insufficient but should be understood within the wider context of humanity, behavior, and theology. "It is simply not true that everyone who is holy is healthy. Nor can holiness be defined as mental health" (McLemore 22). I reject false religions that consider holiness as self-esteem, sin as dysfunction, conversion as processing feelings, and salvation as good mental health. "Psychology is destructive when it becomes a religion. The term religion comes from a root word that means reconnected. True religion, centers on getting reconnected with God" (22-23). The way to reconnect with God and others is through relationships.

## **Leadership Ladders**

Many people of influence discover that leadership is like a ladder. The ladder is challenging and unpredictable to climb. The leadership ladder is shaky and less stable as the Christian leader climbs to the top:

When leaders reach positions of authority, unforeseen instability begins to surface. Such issues as the pressure of success, the temptations of privilege, the demand of followers and the isolation of leadership leave deep depressions on the rungs [of the ladder] caused by the white-knuckle grip of a leader. (Thrall, McNicol, and McElrath 17)

All Christian leaders have ladders to help them climb their respective walls in ministry. The two types of ladders Christian leaders climb in ministry are capacity and character.

### **Capacity Ladder**

Capacity ladders come in multiple and diverse forms. However, all the capacity ladders are constructed from the same four basic rungs: (1) discover what one can do; (2) develop one's capacities; (3) acquire title or position; and, (4) attain individual potential. The rails of both the capacity and character ladders are the cultivation of an environment of grace and relationships of grace (Thrall, McNicol, and McElrath 18).

The capacity ladder is portable. When relationships get tough, leaders can fold up their ladder, pack it away, and move it to another location, but the people stay behind. The frequent movement of the capacity ladder causes fragmentation of families and organizations (Thrall, McNicol, and McElrath 45). Believers are called to serve God and care for one another. "Each of us is created with capacities intended for good, no matter how distorted they have become due to our own failures and the failures of others" (19). After achieving influence and reaching the top of the capacity ladder, Christian leaders



assume they can not talk to others about what they did and did not do (19). The capacity ladder is necessary but not sufficient alone to result in positive Christian leader influence.

The fruit of relationships in grace is honesty (Thrall, McNicol, and McElrath 56). Also, the fruit of relationships through grace is acceptance and affirmation. When peoples' needs are met within relationships of grace, the people become fulfilled (57).

### **Character Ladder**

Character is the inner world of motives and values that shapes individuals' actions. Character is the ultimate determiner of the nature of Christian leadership. Character empowers one's capacities while keeping them in check. Character distinguishes between good stewards of power and those who abuse power. "The character ladder is not as concerned with what we do as it is with who we are" (Thrall, McNicol, and McElrath 94). Character weaves values such as integrity and honesty into the Christian leader's life and ministry.

The ascent, of the character ladder is climbing toward interdependence in Christ (Thrall, McNicol, and McElrath 96). Every rung climbed on the character ladder enables the Christian leader to develop their leadership character. "On the character ladder, the depth of influence is honored above the height position" (50). The character ladder helps people intentionally develop healthy character (31). Healthy Christian leaders flourish in healthy environments and produce healthy followers. "Developing healthy relationships in an unhealthy environment is nearly impossible, as is constructing a positive environment with a group of negative people" (31). The character ladder requires a great deal more personal and organizational investment.

A Christian community must emulate the perichoresis relationship of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The relationship of the Christian leader should be ministering with authenticity, faithfulness, and love. Christian leaders that are healthy, intentionally create safe and open relationships to help mature their followers. “The character ladder leads to a relational organization—community—that honors the completion of tasks. The capacity—ladder—organizations only strive for accountability in order to get things done, but they do so at the expense of people’s hearts” (Thraill, McNicol, and McElrath 50). Combining both ladders results in a unique and stronger ladder because the character ladder functions as an extension of the Christian leader’s capacities, thereby making the ladder stronger :

The capacity and character ladders have fundamentally different underlying assumptions, which naturally lead to different values and outcomes, including environmental change. Three components interact to bring about change at the deepest level: principles, relationships, and environments. (34)

Choice between short ladder and long ladder is not acceptable because Christian leaders must climb both ladders, which is a reasonable way to rise to positions of influence and prominence with character intact (142).

Seven challenges for Christian leaders are

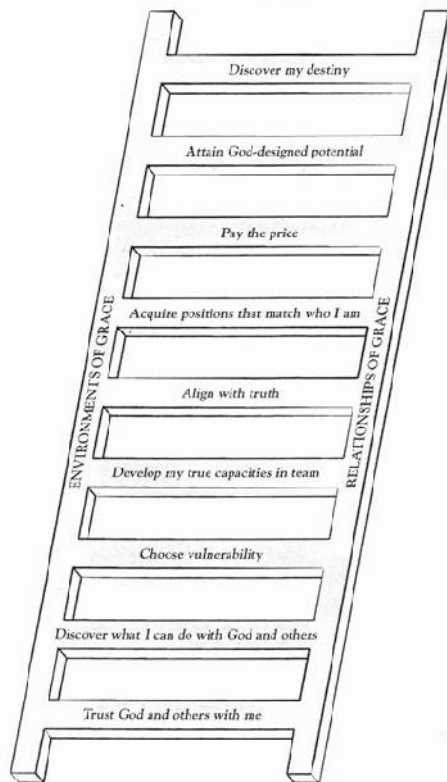
1. Making a commitment to confront complacency;
2. Being good stewards ;
3. Modeling interdependence as they change and grow;
4. Placing their destiny completely in God’s hands;
5. Choosing to benefit with their team and community rather than benefiting from self;

6. Balancing the interplay of time, priorities, and relationships; and,

7. Working continuously to resolve their character weaknesses to work through their unresolved issues (Thrall, McNicol, and McElrath 150-62).

These seven challenges are surmountable with the leading of the Holy Spirit, discernment, and the help of God.

On the leadership ladder, “the first rung is trust God and others. The second rung is choosing vulnerability. The second depends on the first. And the third depends on the second” (Thrall, McNicol, and McElrath 96). The third rung is aligned with truth (88). As Christian leaders, trust is essential but must be earned. Followers trust their Christian leaders not to play games with them and to speak openly and honestly with them (Bennis 169; see Figure 3).



Source: Thall, McNicol, and McElrath 144.

**Figure 3. Integration ascension ladder.**

Healthy and effective Christian leaders do the following. First, they manage the big picture of a vision. Second, they embrace errors by encouraging followers to take risks and learn from their mistakes. Third, they encourage and accept reflective and truthful feedback from followers. Fourth, they encourage dissent. Christian leaders do not feel threatened. Fifth, they possess optimism, faith, and hope, which provide choices. Sixth, they understand the Pygmalion effect in leadership; they expect the best in the people around them as they change and grow and receive it. Seventh, they have a special gift and sense about people and situations. Eighth, they have long-term vision perspective. Ninth, they understand followers' symmetry and include them in vision, and

tenth, they create strategic alliances (Bennis 192-202). Christian leaders provide an environment conducive to hearing different views to ensure they are not surrounding themselves with just clones, enablers, coconspirators, codependents, drifters, freeloaders, compensators, and complementary views.

As Christian leaders in the Christian community relate with followers and vice versa, grace is reciprocal and shows unmerited concern and favor (Thrall, McNicol, and McElrath 29). When grace is extended to others, grace is returned. All grace comes from God. Grace that comes from God can help a Christian leader's emotional development and spiritual growth in their Christian ministry.

### **System Theories**

This study focused on Christian leaders' emotional development in their families of origin and experiences affects their ministries. This study did not focus on how to do family of origin work because the process varies from person to person. One of the goals of this dissertation was to help Christian leaders become healthy in their ministry by identifying the need for personal work in their family of origin in order to break the patterns of generations of functioning in an abusive manner in the Christian community.

System theory requires a new language and a new way of thinking. System theory is a way of conceptualizing reality. It organizes thinking from a specific perspective. System thinking considers the interrelatedness of all parts instead of viewing isolated and unrelated parts. To think systemically is to view the ongoing and vital interaction of the connected parts. System thinking looks for circles of influence not linear cause and effect. System theory focuses attention on how interactions are mutually influenced and how they become patterned or repeated (Steinke, *How Your Church Family* 3-6).

In a human system, the parts are arranged into a whole through “functioning positions.” By functioning in a specific way, each person contributes to the overall system’s balance or imbalance. When everyone functions the same way, the arrangement is stable (Steinke, *How Your Church Family* 9). Stable arrangement in a human system is called homeostasis. Established patterns are also called homeostasis. Homeostasis literally means, “to stay the same” and balanced. System theory informs how the pattern is maintained by the arrangement of the functioning parts (13).

A basic belief in systems theory is that emotional problems in one person affect the entire system because symptomatic people exist within a larger emotional context, and their problems arise out of that context. A particular person comes to a Christian leader with a problem. If the leader places the person with the problem back into the context of their family of origin, then the person can be better understood.

When followers come to a Christian leader for counseling about a problem, the follower will usually have a problem with a person or a group. All humans function based on their deeply embedded patterns of relating to others, which were developed in their family of origin (Nessan 392-93). If Christian leaders fail to see the presenting problems as a metaphor for the followers’ own family emotional issues, they become a part of the story and the problem. Each individual is a part of the whole picture. The problem exists in and encompasses the whole (Richardson, *Becoming a Healthier Pastor* 22). Some Christian leaders are unaware they have grown emotionally numb (Scazzero 54).

### **Family Systems Theory**

The ability to comprehend and practice systems theory in a family comes slowly but is important for avoiding spiritual abuse in the Christian community. The application

of family systems theory concept begins in the family of origin. "Once we see and think of our family as a reciprocal, interactive emotional system, our understanding of family functioning will change" (Richardson, *Becoming a Healthier Pastor* 68). Observation of family members' interrelatedness can help change behavior in relationships.

Murray Bowen is one of the founding fathers of family systems theory. The family is a number of different kinds of systems. Bowen's theory concerns the transmission of psychological dysfunctions over many generations in the family of origin. "Central premise of Bowen's theory was that one must resolve all emotional issues with the family of origin" (Charles 280). The family is a combination of emotional and relationship systems. The term *emotional* refers to the force that motivated the system and the relationship to the way it was expressed (Bowen 158). "The functioning of any system is dependent on the functioning of the larger system of which it is a part, and also on its subsystems" (155). In a family system, dysfunction and overfunction exists in a person at the same time.

According to Bowen, the family systems theory has three major concepts: differentiation of self, family ego mass, and emotional field. The opposite of differentiation is the degree of undifferentiation, which is ego fusion. Family ego mass refers to the nuclear family and includes the father, mother, and children of the present and future generations. Extended family refers to the entire network of living relatives. The term *emotional field* refers to the emotional process in any area being considered (Bowen 161). Ego fusion is meshing one's ego into the ego of another person losing their ego. Family ego mass is nuclear family or extended family field. This study considered self-differentiation, emotional field, and emotional processes and triangles.

## Self-Differentiation

Bowen introduced the term self-differentiation to depict the capacity of maintaining two needed life forces: separateness or individuality and closeness or togetherness to be held in balance (homeostasis). Self-differentiation is explained as follows:

Defining yourself and staying in touch with others, being responsible for yourself and responsive to others, maintaining your integrity and well-being without intruding on that of others, allowing the enhancement of the others' integrity and well-being without feeling abandoned, inferior, or less of a self, having an "I" and entering a relationship with another "I" without losing your self or diminishing the self of the other. (Steinke, *How Your Church Family* 12)

Self-differentiation is a process that occurs in relationship with others.

Human behavior is primarily governed by automatic forces. Usually people act without thinking. "More specifically, interpersonal behavior is indeed reflective-automatic. Most of what we do in relation to others takes place without conscious planning" (McLemore 57). Automatic forces in human beings, for example, when they stub their toes, their immediate focus goes to their painful toe. They want to see if the toe is bleeding or bruised. Humans react to a painful toe without forethought.

Differentiation is a process in which people move toward a more intentional and thoughtful way of life and a less automatic way of functioning. Differentiation is the ability of people to guide their own functioning in life by thinking clearly, acting on principles by determining their instinctive reactions to others, learning to regulate their reactions, defining self by taking a position, staying connected to others, and choosing a responsible course of action.



Self-differentiation is significant in balancing the two life forces, separateness or individuality and togetherness or closeness, when interacting with others (Steinke, *Congregational Leadership* 19). “Differentiation cannot take place in a vacuum. It has to take place in relation to others” (Bowen 1996). Differentiation is essential in personal relationships because it allows people to grow and mature in Christ.

Differentiation is the capacity of family members to define their life’s goals and values apart from surrounding togetherness pressures. Differentiation is the ability to say “we” and the ability to say “I.” It includes the capacity to maintain a relatively nonanxious presence in the midst of anxious systems, to take maximum responsibility for one’s own destiny and emotional being. Simply stated, differentiation means the capacity to be an “I” while remaining connected to others (Friedman 27). True differentiation calls for greater awareness of the dual emotional processes at work both in the personal family emotional systems and within the Christian leader (Richardson, *Becoming a Healthier Pastor* 75).

### **Emotional Field and Emotional Processes**

Christian leaders most significantly affect the whole system because of their position in the emotional field (Steinke, *Congregational Leadership* 67). Emotional processes occur in the emotional field. The concept of emotionality has a very specific meaning because relationships are played out in human emotional processes.

The primary dilemma is that emotional processes as well as spiritual abuse are difficult to observe, appear to be invisible, and often are beyond Christian leaders’ awareness. The church is an emotional unit made of subsystems within a larger system.

The same emotional processes experienced in a nuclear family operate in the church, thus the use of the term “church family” (Steinke, *How Your Church Family* xvi).

Relationship systems have a unique dimension. Relationship systems are distinguished from other systems by emotional processes. These processes are driven by and organized around the two forces of life—the need to be separate and the need to be close to others (Steinke, *How Your Church Family* 6). When these two forces become imbalanced in Christian leaders, followers are spiritually abused. Humans need to be separate, yet not alone, to be close and connected. Again the two forces, togetherness or closeness and separateness or individuality, are in tension, and they produce anxiety. Tension in a relationship system is frightening. The two opposing forces pervade every stage of life. Separateness or individuality and togetherness or closeness is continuously in tension (10-12).

Relationship systems can be arranged in many ways through functioning positions. The most common functioning positions are complementary, contrary, and similarity. “The arrangements are maintained by mutual functioning but disturbed by new ways of behaving. The difference between relationship systems from other systems is emotional processes” (Steinke, *How Your Church Family* 10-11). Individuals function in various ways according to their position within the relationship system. Emotional processes are different in each relationship system.

Emotionality signifies what is instinctual in human behavior, what is imprinted in nerves as innate, and what embraces the deep biological commands on how to live. Emotionality does not allude to feelings such as love, hate, or anger. Although used interchangeably in everyday speech, feelings and emotions are not synonymous in

Bowen's Theory. Feelings are an integral part of the emotional forces within emotionality.

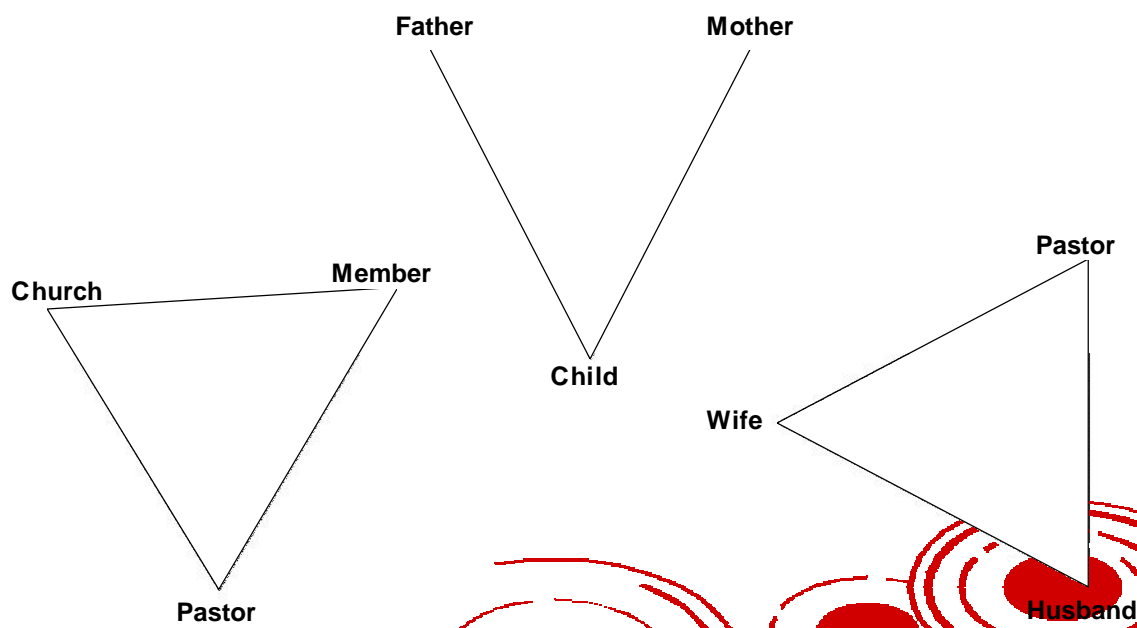
### **Emotional Triangles**

The fundamental structural concept of an emotional system is the triangle. An emotional system consists of a series of interlocking triangles (Bowen 174). Triangles are used to maintain homeostasis in an emotional system:

An emotional triangle is formed by any three persons or issues. The basic law of emotional triangles is that when any two parts of a system become uncomfortable with one another, they will "triangle in" or focus upon a third person, or issue, as a way of stabilizing their own relationship with one another. (Friedman 35)

Emotional triangles serve two purposes in an emotional system, such as absorbing anxiety and camouflaging the system's differences and conflicts (Richardson, *Creating a Healthier Church* 116).

Typical emotional triangles in families are mother-father-child; a parent and any two children; a parent, a child, and a symptom in the child such as doing badly in school, drugs, stealing, sexual acting out, or allergies; and, one spouse, the other, and the other's dysfunction such as drinking, gambling, an affair, or depression (see Figure 4; Friedman 36).



**Figure 4. Emotional triangles.**

Triangles are the most common way people avoid closeness and connection with others. Triangles are the way people stabilize relationships by externalizing their anxiety onto someone or some issue. A common triangle Christian leaders experience is talking with one family member about another family member who is not present in counseling. The more anxiety felt in a relationship, the more likely people will form emotional triangles (Richardson, *Becoming a Healthier Pastor* 29).

Christian leaders should learn and develop from their family of origin work how to be with each follower in a less reactive and more interesting way. Healthier Christian leaders can learn how to reposition themselves in triangles and make themselves a safe resourceful, nonanxious place for followers (Richardson, *Becoming a Healthier Pastor* 33).

### Healthy Congregations

Healthy congregations are made of healthy people who have responsible and enlightened behavior. Christian leaders are the ones who are in the greatest position to help congregations and religious organizations become healthy. They are given responsibility and accountability for the welfare of the congregation and religious organization. Christian leaders establish the tone, invite collaboration, make decisions, restrain what threatens the integrity of the whole, and keep the congregation on track. He or she is empowered to lead, enhance the health of the congregation or religious organization, provide care and protection for the entire congregation, and avoid spiritually abusing people (Steinke, *Healthy Congregations* vii).

Christian leaders must give attention to and work through the presence of anxious forces in the church rather than be surprised by anxious forces and rendered helpless by them, or retreat from their distressing influence, or protect those who spread their disease among others (Steinke, *How Your Church Family* xv). The way to accomplish a healthy congregation or religious organization is for the leader to be healthy. Christian leaders must conceptualize the emotional processes in order to recognize them and let them serve the congregation or religious organization rather than corrupt the purpose of the people bonding together.

### Anxiety

Bowen's significant contributions to the family systems theory were validated by independent instruments. The theory of anxiety in both the individual and family of origin determines the closeness and distance within the family, which impacts fusion (Charles 292). All relationship systems become anxious. When people are together,

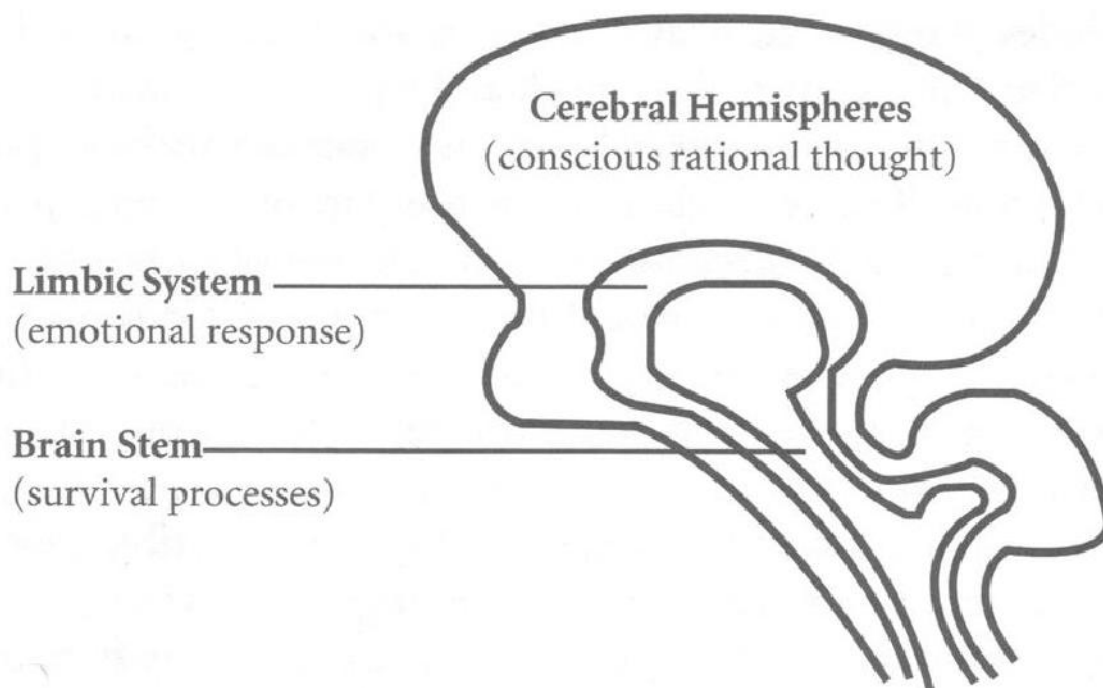
eventually anxiety will develop. Anxiety is infectious because anyone can spread it or catch it from others. Whatever triggers anxiety is unique to each system. Where anxiety is focused in a system as well as what caused anxiety is important. Anxiety is free-floating. Usually the most vulnerable and targeted people in an anxious system are Christian leaders who are responsible for the relationship network. The positive aspect of anxiety is that it provokes change. Also, anxiety is an alarm mechanism when Christian leaders recognize it (Steinke, *How Your Church Family* 15-16).

Relationship systems most adversely affected by anxiety have little capacity to manage differences. When anxiety provokes change, it prods and catapults people toward innovation or transformation. If anxiety reaches a certain intensity, it can prevent the change it provokes, and what it stimulates becomes restraint (Steinke, *How Your Church Family* 16).

Anxiety is triggered in the brain. The working of the human brain must be considered because anxiety affects human thinking capacities. The human brain has three tiers. The three tiers of the brain are the brain stem, the limbic system, and the cerebral hemispheres. Figure 5 shows the three tiers of the human brain. Each brain tier has specific functions in the human body and is superior to all creation. All three tiers of the brain function as one. The first tier is at the base of the brain and is called the brain stem, or reptilian brain, which connects to the central nervous system that regulates automatic processes designed for protection and survival. The second tier of the brain is the limbic system, which is the center of emotional response and is also called the mammalian brain, which regulates behavior. The third tier of the brain includes the cerebral hemispheres, or

the neocortex, also called the thinking cap where conscious rational thought occurs

(Steinke, *How Your Church Family* 16-18).



Source: Steinke, *How Your Church Family* 17.

**Figure 5. Human brain.**

Humans in an anxious environment can respond via two processes. They can respond to anxiety automatically by using the lower or reptilian brain, which defends, discharges, preserves, or reacts. Another response to anxiety uses the cerebral hemispheric brain, or thinking cap, to define, discriminate, and create an appropriate response.

Undifferentiated Christian leaders who respond to anxiety automatically by using their lower reptilian brain explode into defensiveness and react negatively. The undifferentiated Christian leader is more likely to abuse others spiritually.

Two types of anxiety in a system are acute and chronic, which lead to different results. Acute anxiety is situational and crisis generated. Also, acute anxiety provides a warning signal. In the church family, acute anxiety develops around church finances, change in pastoral or lay leadership, and rapid growth in new followers, worship music, and building programs. Chronic anxiety is endless and habitual. Some church families are chronically anxious and tend to have smaller groups split off from time to time, or the intact family becomes submissive to a small manipulative group. Other examples causing chronically anxious church families are changes of leadership, punishment of those calling for change, and conflict (Steinke, *How Your Church Family* 22-23). Conflict in the Christian community is a reality but how it is resolved is important.

### **Conflict Management**

Humans, being who they are, will have conflict. Strategies and tactics used in managing conflict must be identified early. Healthy conflict management must be established prior to conflict. Conflict management skills can be learned. These skills should be taught and reinforced to avoid unhealthy and abusive patterns previously learned and practiced.

Controversy is “the conflict that arises when one person’s ideas, information, conclusions, theories, and opinions are incompatible with those of another person, and the two seek to reach an agreement” (Johnson and Johnson 290). Controversy can be healthy because without controversy one does not consider the perspectives of others. Healthy controversy can result in better decisions, outcome, and a cohesive group. Healthy controversy is cooperative not competitive. Christian leaders must possess or



obtain the skill of handling controversy constructively and collaboratively versus negatively, while affirming each other's personal competence (313).

Constructive use of conflict is vital if a congregation or ministry will be successful. Eight principles that can be used to ensure constructive use of conflict in Christian ministry follow.

1. Learn to respond to conflict in its earliest stages,
2. Keep everyone centered on the conflict issue(s),
3. Monitor the conflict process keeping rules enforced,
4. Help the parties to see creative options available to them,
5. Put your energy into helping the conflicting parties to view every conflict as a problem to be solved,
6. Produce authentic and worthwhile information about issue(s),
7. Provide a context for independent and knowledgeable choices, and
8. Encourage personal commitment to the plan of action which wins mutual agreement. (Gangel and Canine 260-63)

Constructive conflict is healthy controversy, which develops healthy leaders and followers in the Christian community.

Healthy self-concept is vital if a leader is to be effective and differentiated. Self-conception substantiates the important premise of emotional intelligence, which is to know oneself. Proverbs 23:7 says, "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he."

Unsuccessful church leaders, especially pastors, fail because they lack positive self-concept and direction. Therefore, they become poor leaders because of insecurities. These insecurities are why emotional intelligence and honesty is imperative in Christian leadership.

Embedded conflict occurs at three levels: (1) between functions in an organization; (2) between peers who believe they are competing for the same job, and (3) among their subordinates who lack the knowledge how to resolve the issues (Quinn 135).

"An undiscussable issue is one that is important to the group but is too threatening to

discuss within the group” (189). Many Christian communities suffer from undiscussable issues because they are afraid to confront the issues truthfully.

Christian leaders must be willing to learn about themselves and grow. “Conflict offers us the chance to grow, to change our minds and to create new commitments based upon the truth God reveals” (Van Yperen 241). The biblical value for studying self-concept and psychology centers on insight (know thyself), the truth (Word of God), and transparency to other people (vulnerability). Growth in self-concept should be toward insight and truth. A Christian leader must bring their self-concept in line with reality, thereby perceiving actual not mythical strengths and weaknesses (Gangel and Canine 62 - 63). Managing conflict is one critical element of self-awareness (Roxburgh and Romanuk 134).

The way to deal boldly and effectively with conflict in positive ways is to teach about spiritual abuse in order to avoid the pitfalls of spiritual abuse. The use of dynamic inquiry is a positive way to deal with conflict. Dynamic inquiry is focused conversations and honest open-ended questions in a group to foster honest discussion about people's feelings (Lawler 199). The best way to deal effectively with staff conflict and spiritual abuse is to practice emotional intelligence.

Anxiety levels in congregations depict how the influence of Christian leaders' unresolved emotional attachments may be affecting them. The Christian may be less conscious their anxious patterns, which will express their unfinished issues in their ministry (Richardson, *Becoming a Healthier Pastor* 21).

Anxiety greatly affects everyone, and really is about a sense of vulnerability perceived or actual threat. People want to distance themselves from the unpleasant

experience of anxiety (Richardson, *Becoming a Healthier Pastor* 14). “Anxious systems are less likely to allow for differentiated leaders, while leaderless systems are more likely to be anxious” (Friedman 29). A congregation functions healthier in times of crisis when its key Christian leaders are differentiated (Steinke, *Congregational Leadership* 71). To help a Christian leader differentiate, the theory of primal leadership along with emotional intelligence is vital.

### **Primal Leadership Theory**

Emotional intelligence is defined as knowing oneself through self-awareness of feelings and acting to change feelings positively (Goleman 47). The four dimensions of emotional intelligence are self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management. Many factors come into play in accessing emotional intelligence. “Know thyself then means separating who you are and who you want to be” (Bennis 54). To become self-aware and self-invented is a lifetime process (55).

Emotional intelligence is developed in early childhood and continues to form based on sensing seven key ingredients:

1. Confidence and self-control of one’s body, behavior, and world;
2. Curiosity and positive learning that leads to pleasure;
3. Intentionality—competence being effective in action;
4. Self-control and inner control in age-appropriate situations;
5. Relatedness—being understood and understanding others;
6. Capacity to communicate trust in others and verbal ability to interact ideas, feelings; and,

7. Cooperativeness in a group activity, the ability to balance one's own needs with others (Goleman 194).

Emotional intelligence is crucial in leading a healthy and productive congregation. The theory of primal leadership describes when leaders bring about good feelings and emotions in those they lead. What a leader says and does creates an emotional impact on followers (Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee 4-5).

The Pygmalion effect is a powerful theory formulated by Harvard Professor, Robert Rosenthal: "If we expect others to succeed, they probably will—if we expect others to fail they probably will" (Kouzes and Posner, *Encouraging the Heart* 62). The Pygmalion effect is a belief so strong that even if others do not believe in themselves initially, the leader's, or teacher's, or parent's, or colleague's belief gives rise to the follower's self-confidence until the follower believes, "Yes, I can do it" (21). The Pygmalion effect gives hope and plays an essential role in developing followers and in expecting the best of people. Christian leaders must encourage the hearts of those to whom they minister.

The premise of the primal leadership model includes emotional intelligence, which uses scientific discoveries of neurology to explain why leaders' moods and actions have major impact on those they lead (Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee ix).

The role of the prefrontal lobes of the brain is to interact with the amygdale or open system limbic part of the brain. The neocortex is the thinking brain, which is technical and analytical.

Brain research has yielded neurological mechanisms of primal leadership that affect emotional intelligence abilities in the open loop limbic system. The limbic system

involves the emotional center and depends largely on external sources for stimulus. The open loop interpersonal limbic regulation of one person can alter hormone levels or cardiovascular functions inside the body of another, which is called the physiological phenomenon of *mirroring*. People in work groups can catch feelings from one another (Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee 6-7).

Emotional intelligence is developed and experienced in early childhood and continues to form in adulthood. Within the family of origin is a major but usually hidden component of how Christian leaders function emotionally within congregations and religious organizations. Also, when the level of anxiety goes up in a congregation and people become anxious, they tend to revert to their family of origin patterns and ways of functioning (Richardson, *Becoming a Healthier Pastor* ix).

People have been taught how to deal effectively with emotionality as individuals and group members in their families of origin. Often the learned patterns of behavior are not appropriate in roles as Christian leaders within congregations and create greater difficulties for themselves and further raise the level of anxiety and reactivity in congregations. "Individuals who have good success working on themselves in their family of origin will have the best chance of becoming a healthier pastor and more effective leader within their congregation" (Richardson, *Becoming a Healthier Pastor* ix). Personal growth ascertained from family of origin work helps people know their strengths and limitations.

Most people walk around with various levels of health physically and emotionally, and some people are healthier than the norm and some less. Whatever their

level of health, the Bowen theory offers a way to improve their health and level of functioning (Richardson, *Becoming a Healthier Pastor* 3).

Health in this study means the degree of emotional well-being and the level of emotional maturity that allows Christian leaders to engage in the relational aspects of ministry more effectively. Health is how well Christian leaders can manage themselves while relating to followers, especially during times of high anxiety in order to accomplish the congregations' goals (Richardson, *Becoming a Healthier Pastor* 3).

### **The Christian Leader as Person, Minister, and Family Member**

Christian leaders have the most influence on followers. "No group shapes and influences a congregation's health, efficiency, and growth more than church leaders. The way in which the leader functions arises out of who the leader is. The leaders 'being' and 'functioning' are twin to each other" (Steinke, *Congregational Leadership* xi). Knowing and understanding what is happening is very significant, but awareness alone is not enough because someone has to be bold enough to suggest and take action using the theory of primal leadership (xi).

Christian leaders' level of well-being is tied to those around them. Similar to physical sickness that is contagious and can be transmitted to others in a social group, emotional distress can be circulated within a congregation or religious organization. Within a congregation some people have stronger emotional immune systems than others and do not become infected, while others are more vulnerable to the distress.

In congregations, unhealthy Christian leaders attempt to deal with their unresolved attachment issues through their church work. They make the congregation a substitute family to address their family of origin problems. Christian leaders commonly

try to resolve old family of origin issues in their new family of creation—the church or religious organization. In these situations, they try to make their relationships into what they believed was lacking in their family of origin (Richardson, *Becoming a Healthier Pastor* 4). Family of origin is significant:

Our family of origin experience affects the way we go about our work in the church as well as the kind of family we create in our marriage and the relationship we have with our children. Our relationships with our partner and our children are generally our most challenging set of relationships. It is easy to focus exclusively on these relationships because issues with our family of origin are regarded as “history” and thus no longer relevant. Some clergy keep a distance not only from their family of origin but also from their nuclear family and instead put most of their life energy into their work. They may find more intimacy with others in their role as pastor than they do as a fully participating member of their own family. Their church becomes their whole world. (4)

In the Christian community, too often Christian leaders are praised for over focusing and over functioning in ministry while ignoring their nuclear families and refusing to process their family of origin issues.

### **The Christian Leader’s Own Emotional System and Unresolved Emotional Attachment**

The emotional system of the Christian leader is significant: “Emotional attachment is a kind of symbiotic fusion in which the self of one person has not fully separated from another person’s self. It usually involves dependency and a reaction to that dependency. I can’t live without you” (Richardson, *Becoming a Healthier Pastor* 13). Unresolved attachment is the fused aspects of life that are carried from family of origin into adult life. Unresolved attachment has less to do with a specific traumatic event and is more about the ongoing, daily patterns of emotional functioning people experienced within their family of origin. Each person enters into adulthood with past

emotional patterns of adapting to the intensity of a relationship, which continues to affect and shape the present. People enter adulthood with unresolved emotional patterns well established in their personalities.

The use of personality attributes, differentiation, and presumptive personality profiles of siblings is significant. Based on Bowen's research and therapy, he believes that no single piece of data is more important than knowing the sibling position of families in the present and past generations (385).

### **Reactivity**

Reactivity helps a person hide from vulnerability. People can put the focus elsewhere, on others rather than on themselves, which is called blame and evade. Most people hide parts of themselves from others and maybe even from themselves through the mechanism of blame. This practice of hiding self from others in relationships with others is inevitably disturbing (Richardson, *Becoming a Healthier Pastor* 15).

Persons' unresolved emotional attachment is most evident when they experience anxiety. Anxiety-producing situations usually trigger emotional reactions. The greater the anxiety, the more these old emotional patterns of their family of origin will be manifested in relationships as reactivity. The common types of emotional reactivity include the following:

1. Compliance is covering up who one is, what one thinks, feels, and does fit with others;
2. Rebellion is one telling others in various ways that they cannot control him or her;



3. Power struggle is a person being critical of others as a way of silencing them or getting them to not be so aggressive; and,

4. Distance is breaking off emotional or physical contact or both with others (Richardson, *Becoming a Healthier Pastor* 15).

### **The Intensity of Emotional Systems and Unresolved Attachment**

Some aspects of unresolved emotional attachment with individuals' family of origin are always with them, just as sin is always present. Family issues will always stay with people unless they do emotional attachment work in their family of origin. No matter who they are, where they go, with whomever, whatever they do, the same anxiety-based emotional patterns will continue to control how they function.

### **Togetherness and Separateness Balanced in Ministry**

Health also means how people balance the basic life forces of togetherness or connectedness and separateness or individuality. Separateness in family systems theory is not individualism but the level of emotional fusion with others that allows individuality. When Christian leaders are more fused into a togetherness-oriented life, they experience more personal imbalance and more difficulties encountered in their work and family life.

Separateness forces are derived from the need for individuals to have minds of their own, to be centered, and to grow as emotionally healthy separate human beings. Togetherness forces are derived from the need to mingle, to exchange warmth, to be close, and to participate positively in the lives of others. Optimum functioning as a leader requires balancing the two forces, with neither force overtaking the other (Steinke, *Congregational Leadership* 25).

### **The Importance of Addressing Individual Unresolved Emotional Attachment**

Addressing unresolved emotional attachment is important because it affects the work of Christian leaders. The effects are anxiety and reactivity that go beyond immediate family relationships (Richardson, *Becoming a Healthier Pastor* 19). The anxiety and reactivity that go with Christian leadership are not relegated only to the person's immediate family relationships. The patterns are passed from generation to generation (19).

A key variable in the degree to which any family can change fundamentally is the amount of self-differentiation that existed in previous generations and the extended families of both partners. This multigenerational notion is worth mentioning because it helps explain the individual factors creating or overcoming homeostatic resistance and because it provides a theoretical framework for strategies of healing and leadership (Friedman 27).

Christian leaders who have not addressed their own family issues often get into trouble in their churches. Some Christian leaders carry into their churches fear of abandonment, which causes a great deal of chaos in the church family (Scazzero 103). Christian leaders can get locked into power struggles with their congregations, a particular family, or certain followers of the congregation. Everyone exists on a continuum of emotional reactivity (Richardson, *Becoming a Healthier Pastor* 20). Christian leaders fail to be adequate resources to followers because they are driven by unresolved attachments or lack of differentiation and act out in extremely damaging ways.

Christian leaders have less conscious patterns called blind spots that can cause trouble while they are in the role of helping and caring for people. As Christian leaders give advice, they can become overly involved, siding with a particular group or person and get stuck in others' stories. The leaders may become a part of the triangle or try to distance themselves to get out of the relationship, which is manifesting their lack of differentiation (Richardson, *Becoming a Healthier Pastor* 20).

### **Individual Focus Rather than Systemic Focus**

The most common inheritance from parents is the individual model of functioning. A child's problem is in the child: Fix the child, and the leader will fix the problem by focusing on disciplining the child until the behavior is changed to the right outcome. Sometimes the problem is a parent who needs to be fixed or helped, or the problem is a relationship that needs to be healed.

People in congregations tend to identify problems using an individual model of human functioning. A congregation has three areas where problems develop:

1. Key Christian leaders in functioning may be impaired emotionally, socially, physically, or a combination of these.
2. Problems may rise between key leaders and the congregation or between the congregation and the judicatory.
3. An individual or group in the congregation is the focus of the problem that needs to be fixed (Richardson, *Becoming a Healthier Pastor* 21).

A common misconception is that problems in a family system are caused by one person or specific group. This misconception is a symptomatic expression of a larger systemic situation in the congregation or in an individual's family. Anxiety in the

congregation is focused and centered on a person or group as being the problem. If Christian leaders fix the person, group, or relationship, then everything will be all right. A great deal of time and energy is expended on analyzing, diagnosing, and labeling the problem as well as trying to facilitate change. When one problem is fixed, another emerges somewhere else because anxiety has moved into another person or relationship (Richardson, *Becoming a Healthier Pastor* 22).

### **Family and Congregational Process**

In considering family and congregational processes, the family of origin is significant:

The family we grew up in, our family of origin is the most important emotional experience we have in life. Family colors our experience for the rest of our life, shaping the way we tend to perceive ourselves, our relationships, the kinds of decisions we make, and the way we make them. (Richardson, *Becoming a Healthier Pastor* 37)

Christian leaders' family of origin impacts and imprints their psyche and leadership both positively and negatively. A Christian counselor may be needed to assist the Christian leader in doing family of origin work and to make deep personal changes.

Everyone has a story to tell. From a family systems theory view, these stories can be understood as justification for a way of living, beliefs, and values. Some people use the way they were raised as the reason why they are the way they are. "I could be different if they had been different. They made me the way I am" (Richardson, *Becoming a Healthier Pastor* 37).

Some people think of themselves as a victim of their own family story. Many ignore or deny that they have made decisions how they would be in their own families. "No matter what kind of ministry you lead, most of the people involved will bring

emotional ‘baggage’ from their families” (Scazzero 105). When people tell negative stories about their family members being unchangeable and unacceptable, they stay stuck in that emotional field.

The labels used to describe other family members also reveal the position the person has taken in life. Labels restrict the describer’s ability to move in relationships because they solidify a point of view. “When other people become distant and noncommunicative, then they begin to fill in the gaps with their imagination. It is a circular or reciprocal process” (Richardson, *Becoming a Healthier Pastor* 38). Labels also limit individuals’ options in how they see their families. If all people can see in other family members are alcoholics, liars, or stingy or self-centered persons, then their behavior toward them will be set.

Doing family of origin work is where resistance occurs. When people have built their personality and view of the world in a certain way, developing a new view of family members can be very threatening. Changing their view of family will change the whole idea of self and the way of being in the world. Family work requires that they stop seeing their family members in terms of saints, sinners, clowns, or troublemakers, but in a larger context.

The first step in family of origin work is understanding that personal difficulties in life could be connected to their experience in their family. Having this important insight and doing the family work are two very different things (Richardson, *Becoming a Healthier Pastor* 39).

Born-again Christian counselors use four nomothetic approaches in counseling:

(1) Bible-only counselors consider the integration of psychological principles as religious

beliefs in therapy unwise; (2) closed counselors are Christian therapists in private and personal life who refuse to discuss spiritual issues in psychotherapy sessions; (3) closet counselors may have integrated faith with psychological principles but elect not to express it openly in sessions; and, (4) conjoint counselors take a balanced approach to counseling by utilizing explicit expressions of spiritual aspects in a treatment plan as well as a psychological assessment and treatment techniques. Conjoint Christian counselors are highlighted and recommended in this study because they help bring resolution in Christ (Anderson, Zuehlke, and Zuehlke 70-83).

Conjoint counselors incorporate physical, psychological, and spiritual aspects of the whole person. Conjoint therapists are the only Christian therapists who use biblical, spiritual, and psychological techniques in counseling to get to the root issues and then help bring resolution in Christ (Anderson, Zuehlke, and Zuehlke 83).

Conjoint therapists counsel from a Christian perspective and embrace spiritual resources, compatible insights, and methodologies from the sciences of mental health. Conjoint therapists believe that mentally healthy people are “those who have a true knowledge of God, a true knowledge of who they are as children of God, and a balanced biblical worldview that includes the reality of the spiritual world” (Anderson, Zuehlke, and Zuehlke 81). A conjoint counselor approach combines the ministries of counseling and discipleship. Conjoint counselors help individuals understand how unresolved issues from their past such as from their families of origin, which contribute to their present struggles (81). Many Christian leaders that are not trained conjoint counselors try to counsel their followers without the credentials of a therapist and cause great harm. Other Christian leaders approach counseling their followers using family therapy.

Edwin H. Friedman used the family therapy approach by deemphasizing the notion that conflicts and anxieties are due primarily to personality makeup. He suggests instead that individual problems have more to do with relational networks, the makeup of others' personalities, where individuals are within the relational systems, and how they function within that position (13). The most important ramification of homeostasis in family theory is its emphasis on position rather than personality. The concept of homeostasis also helps explain a system's resistance to change (19).

The premise of considering the personalities of others while dismissing the personality of oneself is faulty. Personality attributes determine how and where a person functions, interacts, and reacts within a family system. Personality attributes bridge the family systems theory with personalities and personality dysfunctions, which are not based on position but on the forces within the system affecting the whole. The whole system is spiral, not linear. The personality is developed in the family system. The personality is used to function in a certain position in the family system.

Religious institutions not only function like families but they also contain families. They often derive their very structure from families. The emotional process in religious organizations not only mirrors the emotional process in personal families but both types of family systems plug into one another. The mirroring of emotional process in both systems is the major reason why unresolved issues in Christian leaders' three families can produce symptoms in one of the others and why within that emotional interlock often lays the key to knowledge or further stress (Friedman 195).

Christian leaders' three families are their families of origin, their nuclear families, which includes their spouses and children, and their congregations, the creation family.

Christian leaders' nuclear family system interlocks with the emotional system of the congregational family and family of origin. The family processes are spiral and not linear. The changes in the Christian leaders' families of origin and nuclear families affect changes in the congregational family as well (Friedman 282-87). "It is possible to bring change to a congregational families problem by focusing on unresolved issues in the personal families of the clergy or lay leaders, [rather than on issues in the session,] the vestry or board of trustees" (196). Often Christian leaders are guilty of transference in congregational problems because they fail to work through their family of origin and nuclear family issues.

The concept of homeostasis is used to explain how leaders' personalities change when becoming leaders in hierarchical systems (Friedman 202). Dale Galloway stated in a Beeson Institute seminar on *Advantages and Disadvantages of Hiring from Within* that "Christian leaders' lives must be In-Order and not Out-of-Balance." The "Life-in-Order, Out-of-Order" concept does not mean the Christian leader's life is immoral or is about human frailty, but a life can be out-of-balance. Christian leaders' lives will get out-of-balance before becoming out-of-order. Christian leaders must pay attention to their marriages and health in order to remain balanced. When Christian leaders' lives become out of balance in either their families of origin or nuclear families, usually leaders become out of order, which can result in abusive behavior. The leadership system and model God employs in the congregation is the perichoretic model; it is not hierarchical.

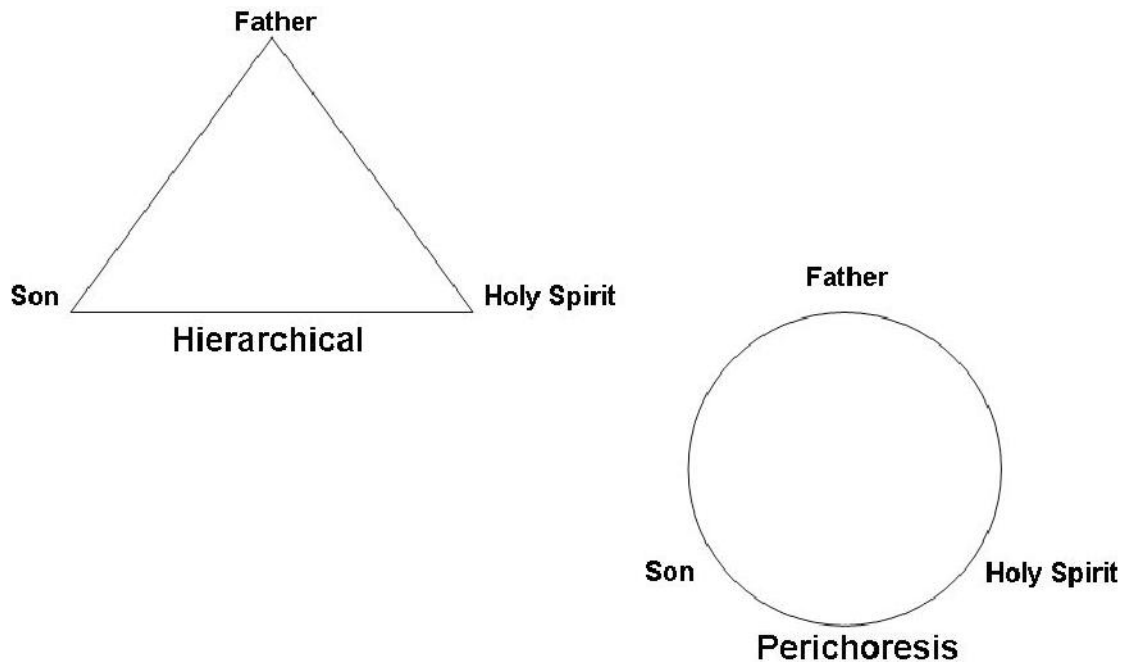
### **Perichoretic Leadership Model**

The premise of a perichoretic model is the Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are in fellowship in perichoresis. A triangle is often used to visualize the Trinity with the



Father at the top of the triangle making the relationship hierarchical. A different presentation of the fellowship in the Trinitarian personhood relationship as a circle, sharing constantly, moving in a dance and not a triangle, is powerful. This perichoretic image of the Trinity implies intimacy, equality, unity, yet distinction, and love (Cladis 4). Christian leaders are partnering in the ministry of Jesus Christ, *to* the Father, *through* the Holy Spirit, for the sake of the church and world (Seamands 20; see Figure 6).

In considering the Trinity as the nature of God, the perspective of family systems theory provides an example of a systems approach. The three divine persons of the Trinity are a single system in perichoresis with each other and function self-differentiated from each other but cannot be separated from the unity of the whole system. The oneness of God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—must be comprehended as a community of three divine persons. The relationships in the Trinity maintain the “unity of the system” and the “distinction of the persons” (Nessan 393-94).



**Figure 6. Perichoretic leadership model.**

As a community of believers, Christian leaders and the church form the *ecclesia* through the perichoretic model. The perichoretic model highlights the Trinitarian personhood as serving one another with full equality, glad submission, mutual deference, and joyful intimacy (Cladis 155).

### **The Dark Side of Leadership Theory**

Individuals' personalities have been slowly intermingled with emotions, experiences, expectations, and examples since childhood, which has created their dark sides (McIntosh and Rima 28-29). All Christian leaders must learn about their dark side as well as how they were created. "Wherever and in whatever capacity you lead others, you need to understand your own dark side" (33). Even as a spouse and parent, a Christian leader should understand their dark side in order to be healthy adults and leaders. "Who you are matters. What you believe and how that shapes your character

does in fact make a difference to the people you lead” (Wright viii). All leaders possess within them the raw materials necessary to manufacture their dark sides:

None of us are immune. We are not, as some would suggest, “whole” at birth, only to be tainted by cultural and sociological influences as we experience life. But rather, we all enter life with the same primal baggage just waiting to be unpacked, hanging on the hangers of our life experiences, and finally placed in the closet that is our dark side. Without a doubt, much of what determines how a leader’s dark side will develop, as well as how he or she will deal with that dark side once in leadership stems from the family the person grew up in and his or her childhood years through adolescence. As we grow toward adulthood, our dark side begins to develop silently, only to emerge fully at some future date, often after leadership has been attained. (McIntosh and Rima 69-70)

The silent development of the dark side is detrimental to Christian leaders and their followers. Their childhood experiences greatly shape the individual’s dark side unbeknownst to them.

The theory of the dark side and how it is developed in a person’s family of origin affirms the concepts of family systems theory. The dark side is often revealed during moments of frustration or anger. The dark side can be a catalyst for good and bad in life (McIntosh and Rima 34). “The sad reality is that all too often, when we are living and leading from the ‘shadow’ of our dark side, danger lurks around virtually every corner, not only for us but also for the people and organizations that we lead” (McIntosh and Rima 35). The result of denying that everyone has a dark side that is destructive to them and the people they lead is a tragedy.

When Christian leaders refuse to process in healthy ways their feelings of abandonment, insecurity, personal shame, unhealthy codependence issues, deeply sublimated anger or fear, or some combination of these or others issues, most likely they will wreak havoc in their lives and leadership and eventually endanger themselves and

spiritually abuse others. Christian leaders must come to terms with their dark side. “We need to realize that we are not alone in our struggle against the dark side and that it is not exclusive to twentieth century televangelists and the pastors of today’s mega churches” (McIntosh and Rima 50). The devastating failures that Christian leaders experience across the spectrum of leadership is the result of them functioning from their dark side.

Leading from the dark side causes spiritual abuse in both megachurches and small rural congregations. “The critical factor in how our dark side will impact our leadership is the extent to which we learn about its development and understand how it influences us” (McIntosh and Rima 70). Essentially, Christian leaders must determine the magnitude of their dark side on their leadership. Once Christian leaders have ascertained the breadth and depth of their dark side essence, they can work to better their leadership behavior. “Nothing is truly yours until you understand it—not even yourself. Our feelings are raw, unadulterated truth, but until we understand why we are happy or angry or anxious, the truth is useless to us” (Bennis 61). Self-reflection of one’s experience is important and leads to self-understanding and being a great leader.

Behaviors such as perfectionism, overeating, alcoholism, compulsiveness in spending, and exercise are a few signs of the dark side and should be explored (McIntosh and Rima 71). Any behavior and urge that seems to overpower or motivate an uncontrollable drive in a person is a sign indicating the presence of their dark side. These shadow-making processes are not alone. They are accompanied by developmental years in the family of origin, which provided a catalyst for the mixture that determines the final shape of an individual’s dark side. “With rare exception the experiences of our childhood determine the degree to which we are controlled by the dark side of our personality and

how it manifests itself when it comes to the exercise of leadership” (72). The urgency for self-examination and family of origin work grows exponentially daily in order to be healthy Christian leaders.

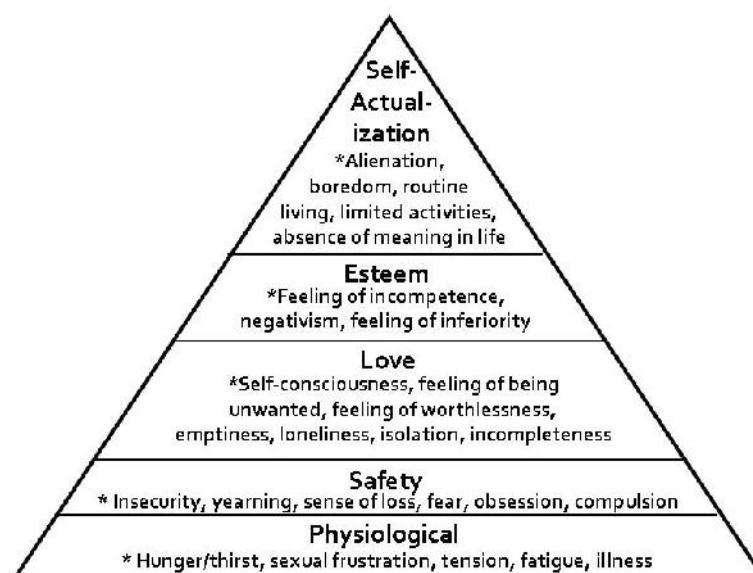
### **Hierarchy of Needs**

In understanding how the dark side is developed, persons must consider their family of origin and the needs that drive them. Abraham Maslow’s hierarchy of needs is most often associated with psychology or business courses (McIntosh and Rima 74) and is foundational in understanding the dark side. “Every one of us has needs that can only be met by God and others. A need is anything we require or lack, in order to be fulfilled and productive” (Thrall, McNicol, and McElrath 44). Also, every human being has a need for significance, for protection, for security, and for provision.

The hierarchy of needs functions on the basis of a pyramid of needs and wants. The pyramid is hierarchical with five levels. The base of the pyramid is the basic human physiological needs. The next higher level is safety needs. The third is a need for love. The fourth level is the need for esteem. The fifth and top level of the pyramid is the need to self-actualize (Hersey and Blanchard 26-30).

The premise of the pyramid of needs is that people must have their needs met at the lower level before going to the next higher level. “This quest to satisfy our needs only ends with death. It is not a static process but rather one that is quite dynamic” (McIntosh and Rima 74-75). Basic human needs are essential for a balanced life, good health, and success. The effort to obtain needs is an ongoing process. Whenever Christian leaders encounter greed, lust, or avarice in a person the lack of trust in God is surely at the root. Lack of trust also produces lack of gratitude (Thrall, McNicol, and McElrath 73).

Gary L. McIntosh and Samuel D. Rima, in their theory of the dark side of leadership, present a pyramid highlighting reactions when essential needs are not met (see Figure 7).



Source: McIntosh and Rima 75.

**Figure 7. Hierarchy of needs.**

Missing blocks of a needs pyramid is feeling permanently threatened in one of the essential needs in the pyramid is how the dark begins to develop. The missing block is caused by a traumatic event experienced during childhood or the developmental years. Meeting the need becomes a controlling element of the person's personality when a certain event threatens one of the need areas in the pyramid or deprives a person in any way. If a person is unaware how to meet these needs, the attempts to meet the needs are sublimated and begin forming the person's dark side.

When a child or adolescent is abandoned or suffers a loss of a parent by death, the loss can threaten the child's safety needs and cause a missing block that the child will

consciously or subconsciously attempt to satisfy. For example, if Christian leaders come from strict homes with unrealistic standards and perfectionist parents who withheld approval or love until perfection was ascertained, this type of home threatens the need that children have to feel approval and acceptance by their parents. Parents are the most important people in their children's lives. The lack of the parents' approval and love creates a deep hole in children, which can set them on a never-ending journey to gain parent approval. In any type of unmet pyramid need, the same process will occur. Even though some people are aware of the dysfunctions that existed in their families of origin, they may be unable to make the direct connection between their families of origin experiences and their pyramid needs.

Existential debt cannot be paid and is another important element in the development of Christian leaders' dark sides. Existential debt is the belief that whatever the unmet need is, it is the fault of the person and must somehow be satisfied by him or her. "When people feel they owe an existential debt of this nature, it is a powerful contributing factor in the development of their dark side. In some cases people spend their entire adult life trying to repay an existential debt" (McIntosh and Rima 78). The affixation to repay an existential debt is debilitating in Christian leaders' lives, causing them to obsess in meeting the need.

A clear pattern emerges in the study of the dark side, which involves four specific stages: (1) the existence of a basic needs pyramid, (2) a traumatic experience that threatens the satisfaction of certain needs leaving some unmet, resulting in a "missing block" in the pyramid of needs, (3) the feeling that an unmet need is a personal failure, which creates an emotional debt to be paid through unhealthy behaviors, and (4) the

development of the dark side from combined effects of needs, traumatic experiences, and emotional debts (McIntosh and Rima 79-80).

In family systems theories, certain patterns also emerge. For many people the particulars will be different, but the basic process is the same. The particular could be an alcoholic parent or lack of popularity in high school, which leads to development of the dark side. When these or other experiences are combined with the raw materials of pride, selfishness, self-deception, and wrong motives, they determine how individuals' dark sides develop into powerful and controlling influences in their lives and leadership.

The dark side can produce good or bad, joy or pain, potential or problems for Christian leaders when they are driven to achieve. "Since leaders deal with people, not things, leadership, without values, commitment, and conviction can only be inhumane and harmful" (Bennis 163). The negative aspect of the dark side rises to the surface when Christian leaders use it selfishly only to fulfill their own needs and wants at the expense of the follower, which results in spiritual abuse. If Christian leaders discover and learn how to understand their dark side, it can be used to serve God's will and purposes rather than their unmet needs.

The dark side of leadership is a natural human development shaped in a person's family of origin. Simply understanding the concept of the dark side is not enough nor does it remove the scars or pain of family of origin and adulthood (McIntosh and Rima 104).

### **Manifestations of the Dark Side Theory**

The various characteristics of the dark side have been grouped into five broad categories that can provide a general framework needed to begin to understand Christian



leaders' unique dark sides. The five categories are narcissism, passive-aggressiveness, paranoia, compulsiveness, and codependency.

### **Narcissistic Leader**

In ancient Greek mythology a young boy named Narcissus was so extremely handsome that his peers were attracted to him, but no one could befriend him. One day Narcissus was walking along a mythical river and stopped to get a drink of water. He saw his own image reflected in the water and became transfixed. At that moment, Narcissus loved his own image. He could not love or return love to anyone else because he was so obsessed with his own image. Narcissus became so in love with his own reflection that he could not leave the river side. He lay down by the river and wrote to himself until he was absorbed by the earth and became a flower (McIntosh and Rima 111-12). Various signs of narcissistic leaders include the following:

[They are] driven to succeed by a need for admiration and acclaim. They may have an inflated sense of importance as well as great ambitions and grandiose fantasies. At the heart of narcissistic leaders are self-absorption and uncertainty due to deep feelings of inferiority. In addition, they may not enjoy their success and may be dissatisfied with their lives. (117)

Narcissistic leaders are self-centered and appear outwardly to be in control. "Narcissism as a psychopathological construct has its origins in psychoanalytic theory" (Rivas 22). Simply stated, narcissism is excessive self-love and self-centeredness, and Heinz Kohut popularized the term narcissistic personality disorder (22). All narcissistic personalities are not spiritual abusers. Everyone has a degree of narcissism because without it no one could develop self-esteem or obtain goals (Steinke, *Congregational Leadership* 166).

Charismatic Christian leaders with a narcissistic pathology have the propensity to abuse others spiritually. Pathological narcissism is excessive investment in self at the

expense of investment in others. Narcissists are motivated by the continuous need to feed their grandiose perception of self by coercing, charming, or controlling others. Narcissists require others to assure their grandiosity by constantly affirming their specialness, exaggerated importance, superiority, and perfectionism.

Narcissistic Christian leaders use their charm to create the appearance of specialness because they function out of a low self-esteem, insecurity, and abandonment issues. Narcissistic Christian leaders form a circle of charm as the charmer of the charmed. The followers are the charmed who adore the narcissists. Narcissists seek people who can contribute to their success by welcoming them into their circle of charm. Congregations can be a warehouse of narcissistic food for Christian leaders.

Narcissists need to be the center of attention and in the limelight. Narcissistic Christian leaders are masters at denying reality, creating a circle of charm where the roles of a toxic faith system thrive. Narcissists' circle of charm is facilitated by coconspirators and enablers of toxic faith systems as well as by undifferentiated leaders, which do not balance separateness or individuality in relationships.

Charismatic leaders tend to use symbolic status power. These Christian leaders have personality and psychological makeups (e.g., narcissistic) that cause them to abuse followers by using symbolic status. Symbolic status is insidious and can greatly harm the followers' psychological well-being without them being aware (Sankowsky 57). In other words, symbolic status is a form of spiritual abuse that often goes undetected.

Christian leaders are sought because they have a charismatic personality. "When a leader is both charismatic and narcissistic, he or she is likely to successfully abuse the power of symbolic status—that is, to induce followers to buy into abusive behaviors"

(Sankowsky 57). The illuminated side to charisma is usually considered a highly positive and attractive attribute:

Narcissism is a particularly powerful personality disorder. It generally takes the form of a grandiose sense of self-importance, a preoccupation with fantasies of unlimited success, power, or love, and exhibitionist orientation. Narcissistic individuals act as if they are entitled to receive the service of others and tend toward exploitative and manipulative behavior. (64)

Symbolic status allows Christian leaders more control over their interpersonal relationships of followers and ultimately over the belief systems that followers adopt (59).

The essence of symbolic status is derived from the psychoanalytic term *transference*. Therefore, followers are seeking their leaders' approval (Sankowsky 59). "The power of symbolic status, rooted in powerful, unconscious drives, enhances a leader's potential to fundamentally alter followers' perceptions, emotions, and thoughts" (59). Any Christian leader is capable of using symbolic status to control or dominate followers. Nevertheless, Christian leaders may knowingly or unknowingly perpetrate symbolic status on followers. "Even Christian leaders that are not narcissistic or charismatic can abuse their symbolic status because the power of symbolic status is still strong enough to induce some followers to fully accept the leader's vision, direction, explanations, and attributions" (58). The power of this hierarchical status becomes abusive when Christian leaders use their position to manipulate authority at the followers' expense.

Christian leaders are not educated to be aware of the transference phenomenon but can critically and intentionally prevent symbolic abuse through self-awareness, taking responsibility and evaluating themselves to ensure the psychological and emotional well-

being of their followers. Sometimes followers collude with their Christian leaders and share the leaders' delusional grandiose belief systems (Sankowsky 69), which becomes a toxic faith system. Christian leaders can avoid abusing their symbolic status by learning to identify, interrupt, and prevent these destructive cycles through modifying their behavior—in particular by self-monitoring their behavior and honest self-confrontation (70).

The dynamics of narcissism revolve around the lack of leaders' self-knowledge and practice of emotional intelligence: "Narcissistic charismatic leaders may be unaware of their abuse; in blaming others they are making doubts about their own self-confidence and deceiving themselves about their role in the failure" (Sankowsky 64). The use of primal leadership in order to become self-aware is void in narcissist people because they are inwardly impaired and unhealthy. Followers are emotionally intertwined with narcissistic Christian leaders through a circle of charm. The circle of charm does not allow followers freedom (Steinke, *Congregational Leadership* 165-73).

Symptoms of narcissistic personality disorder are a "pervasive sense of grandiosity, need for admiration, and a lack of empathy for the feelings of others" (Rivas 24). Narcissistic personality disorder can be conceptualized into two subtypes along a continuum of overt and covert. Type one narcissistic individuals are oblivious, thick-skinned, egotistical, grandiose, and arrogant. They crave attention and disregard the feelings and reactions of others. Type two narcissistic individuals are at the opposite end of the continuum and present as hypervigilant, thin-skinned, dissociative, and vulnerable (27).

## **Sense of Coherence**

The sense of coherence concept for an individual is best understood on a continuum with wellness at one end and sickness at the other end. A sense of coherence takes a global view of the world rather than a response to a specific situation (Cohen 49). A sense of coherence has three interrelated components: comprehensibility, manageability, and meaningfulness. Comprehensibility is how individuals perceive stimuli to make cognitive sense. Manageability is handling the resources available to meet the stimuli. Meaningfulness is how life makes sense emotionally. In a sense of coherence the internal and external coping resources are found in the three interrelated components: comprehensibility, manageability, and meaningfulness, which provides the emotional, cognitive, and motivational basis for the mobilization of coping resources (50). All three components provide a positive relationship between a sense of coherence and good physical and mental health but a negative relationship between a sense of coherence and poor physical and mental health (50). “Sense of coherence is a product affecting and affected by many factors during childhood and the socialization process” (50). Christian leaders learn and grow from the study of their personality tendencies. To grow in Christlikeness requires hard work, energy, inconvenience, time, courage, solitude, and a solid understanding of the grace of God in the gospel (Scaz zero 55). Emotional health and spiritual health are like conjoined twins who are sharing the same internal organs; they are inseparable (50).

This study approached spiritual abuse from a biblical and psychological view within and outside of one's family of origin. “In an attempt to understand the personality variables, I chose to approach first a primary psychological structure—the human

tendency to narcissism —from which an individual derives his/her perception of his/her ability to cope with the world” (Cohen 50). Initially, the narcissistic leader was the focus of this study but it now includes other personality types as well. Other theoreticians have attempted to explain “the development of this personality tendency [narcissism]” (51). Some do not regard narcissism as merely pathology but also as a part of the individual’s development:

Hence narcissistic individuals are preoccupied in defending themselves through self worship at the expense of investing in others. They react to the criticism of others with apathy, coldness, fierce anger, feelings of inferiority, shame, humiliation, or vacuity a sense of, I’m entitled, and the expectation of special benefits without any recompense on their part. As a result of this personality structure, the narcissistic individual tries, in every possible situation, to acquire reinforcements for the impaired self. (51)

The narcissistic personality disorder is cultivated and nurtured during Christian leaders’ childhood and socialization.

The relationship among sociodemographic characteristics such as age, economic situation, education, marriage, and a sense of coherence in regard to the study of narcissistic tendencies is valid (Cohen 52). “Healthy narcissism develops through reactions of mirroring and idealization of the parental figure. In this way, the coherent, balanced and stable self, which combines ambition, inner strength, and the ability of self-regulation, is formed” (51). Unhealthy relationships in the families of origin usually result in unhealthy and wounded children that turn into emotionally crippled adults.

### **Biblical Narcissistic Leader**

Solomon became king and led the Israelites after his legendary father, King David. Solomon came to the throne with much family tension. Adonijah, Solomon’s oldest brother, declared himself king before King David’s death. Young and

inexperienced, Solomon was urged by his mother, Bathsheba, and the prophet Nathan to be installed as king before Adonijah (1 Kings 1:11-35). Other families of origin tensions included adultery, triangles, and anxiety. Solomon developed a sense of inferiority and a powerful drive within himself to make a name for himself in a grandiose way:

Even with a cursory reading of Solomon's project list it is easy to recognize the focus of all his efforts—himself! With the constant refrain of me, mine, and myself, King Solomon reveals that he is obsessed with himself and with creating an image that would outshine the star of his father, David. (McIntosh and Rima 112-14)

In addition to having a narcissistic pathology, a spiritually abusive Christian leader may be obsessive compulsive.

### **Paranoid Leader**

Paranoid leaders have strong feelings of insecurity resulting in a lack of confidence. Signs of paranoid leaders are fearfulness, suspicion, hostility, and jealousy. They are hypersensitive to the actions of others; afraid someone will undermine their leadership and create rigid structures for control (McIntosh and Rima 125). Many Christian leaders are afraid to take vacations for fear they will lose control of followers who will plot against them.

Paranoid leaders have difficulty developing and maintaining close relationships with followers in their congregations or religious organizations. Paranoid leaders avoid self-disclosure and transparency. Many Christian leaders jokingly say, "I would never let the governing board meet without me" (McIntosh and Rima 124). This type of joking exemplifies the deep-seated insecurity of paranoid leaders.

### **Biblical Paranoid Leader**

King Saul's dark side subverted his leadership and God's plans. He preempted the priest's role and made an offering to God (1 Sam. 13:9-15). King Saul used a sorcerer.

"Saul's leadership was marred by suspicion, distrust of those around him, including close family members, attempts to coerce loyalty, and even spying" (McIntosh and Rima 121).

King Saul sought to kill his own son, Jonathan, who was saved by the favor of the people (1 Sam. 14:42-45). He became suspicious that young David wanted his throne. King Saul tried to kill David numerous times because David was highly regarded by the people (1 Sam. 18:5-16).

### **Passive-Aggressive Leader**

Some characteristics of passive-aggressive leaders are intentionally inefficient, forgetful, and stubborn. These leaders are procrastinators, resist demands, tend to complain, and seek to control those around them and their environment. Passive-aggressive leaders use short outbursts of anger or sadness. Passive-aggressive leaders are individuals with bitterness. They fear success because it will require greater expectations (McIntosh and Rima 143). This fear of success can be so ingrained that Christian leaders are not aware of its presence.

Passive-aggressive Christian leaders have pessimistic outlooks. They constantly complain about the lack of broad support or not being allowed to lead their way. Passive-aggressive Christian leaders may become impatient and irritable when things do not meet their specifications in congregational board meetings. Their frustration usually leads to an emotional outburst, and it may occur during a future environment and be unrelated to the current situation. Therefore, a pattern of erratic emotional behavior is observed over a



period of time (McIntosh and Rima 142). This form of the dark side is very prevalent among Christian leaders.

### **Biblical Passive-Aggressive Leader**

Jonah is an example of a passive-aggressive leader. God gave Jonah, a prophet, the assignment to go preach in the city of Nineveh about their impending doom. Jonah as a passive-aggressive leader became angry and bitter and refused to go to Nineveh. Jonah was stubborn and proud. He boarded a ship going away from Nineveh. A storm developed, and Jonah confessed to the crew that he was the cause of the storm. The crew was afraid they would all die. Jonah told the crew to throw him overboard to save themselves. They threw Jonah overboard. Jonah was swallowed by a great fish and found himself in its belly for three days and three nights. Jonah repented and obeyed God. The city of Nineveh was saved (Jon. 1:12-15). Jonah possessed traits of a passive-aggressive individual in resisting God's instructions and becoming frustrated and irritable.

### **Compulsive Leader**

The compulsive leader is another manifestation of the dark side (McIntosh and Rima 108). The need to maintain absolute order in the context of leadership describes compulsiveness (105). Compulsive leadership is produced by leaders' compulsive personality because leaders view congregations and religious organizations as an extension of their lives that must be controlled at all costs. Compulsive individuals appear to be cool and calm on the outside but inwardly are emotional volcanoes. Compulsive persons are characteristically angry rebellious individuals who do not express their true feelings (105-06).

Compulsive leaders pursue perfection to an extreme in their personal and professional lives. They develop and maintain very rigid and highly systemized daily routines in their families and organizational leadership. Compulsive leaders tend to be very status conscious and continually look for approval. They work excessive hours and can become workaholics to the detriment of their nuclear families. Compulsive leaders establish an unhealthy example and environment for staff in their congregations or religious organizations.

Compulsive type leaders are more likely to be overly moralistic, conscientious, and judgmental of themselves and others. These feelings can be the result of a rigid childhood where unrealistic expectations were placed on them or can be the product of some failure or childhood trauma to which they were not allowed to give appropriate expression. Compulsive leaders respond to their inner turmoil by tightly suppressing their feelings so much so that outwardly the result is the opposite of turmoil: They appear to be highly controlled and ordered individuals (McIntosh and Rima 106).

### **Biblical Compulsive Leader**

An infant was abandoned by birth parents and was adopted by a wealthy, well-connected, and powerful family. The child grew (Exod. 2:1-10). One day the child noticed the difference in physical features from his adopted family. When he grew into a powerful young man, he learned of his true cultural heritage. Understanding why his parents abandoned him did not remove the emotional pain and the stinging scars in his heart. Seeing his race of people living in bondage resulted in murder. His adopted grandfather sought to kill him for his crime of murder (Exod. 2:11-15). The young man fled to a foreign country. These experiences were Moses'. His dark side was developed

and framed during his formative years from unmet needs and resulted in Moses becoming a compulsive leader.

Moses led approximately three million Israelites from their Egyptian bondage. No one leader can exercise direct control over such a massive number of people, the biblical record says Moses felt the need to have solo control until his father-in-law, Jethro, suggested delegation of authority (Exod. 18:13-27). Moses occasionally had outbursts of anger. One outburst of anger when he disobeyed God and struck the rock twice (Num. 20:7-12) caused Moses to be forbidden to enter the Promised Land (Deut. 34:4; McIntosh and Rima 103-05).

### **Codependent Leader**

The forces of codependency are powerful and unlike other leadership types, such as compulsive, paranoid, and narcissistic. Codependency does not fall under any particular recognized personality disorder. Codependency is more of a generic trait or behavior found in various personality types and can be a component of many personality disorders (McIntosh and Rima 133).

Codependent leaders are immersed in a social system that develops around relationships and people who are compulsively dependent on alcohol, drugs, food, and pornography (McIntosh and Rima 133). Codependent Christian leaders avoid confrontation at all cost and appear to be benevolent but fail to express their feelings openly. They react to the behavior, pain, and problems of others. Codependents become a chasm of repressed anger and frustration (134-35).

A common trait of codependent Christian leaders is avoidance, failing to confront and deal with individuals who have inappropriate behavior in congregations or religious

organizations. The end result of inaction on the part of Christian leaders is enabling unhealthy and unbiblical behaviors within congregations. Codependent leaders try to be peacemakers who cover up problems in congregations in order to keep balance in the system. In local congregations, codependent Christian leaders' schedules are out of control and workloads are unbearable because they cannot say no to followers.

Codependent leaders become enablers or coconspirators in a toxic faith system:

When a leader commits adultery, embezzles money from the church, or gets caught exposing himself, the most frequent explanation heard among the ranks of the faithful is "Boy, the devil is sure working overtime," with little attention given to the realities of human dysfunction. It is not that we are discounting spiritual warfare or demonic activity entirely when it comes to leadership failures. Clearly we face a menacing enemy who actively opposes God's people and work. But attributing all of our leadership failures and miscues to the devil or demonic influence lets us off the hook. When we do that, we transfer responsibility of our actions to a spiritual adversary we are evidently powerless to resist. (McIntosh and Rima 168)

Christian leaders are deceitful when they refuse to consider that their sinful behavior is caused by their dark side; therefore, they wreak havoc on followers. "Self-deception is so pervasive it touches every aspect of life. Self-deception blinds us to the true cause of problems, and once blinds, all the 'solutions' we can think of will actually make matters worse" (Arbinger Institute viii). The spirit of deception is an ungodly trait and behavior for Christian leaders.

### **Biblical Codependent Leader**

Samson, a Nazirite from birth, was raised in a strict environment and was prohibited from cutting his hair, drinking wine or eating grapes, and marrying outside of his people (Judg.13:3-7). Samson had a special call on his life to deliver Israel from the oppressive Philistines. However, "Samson was a leader who struggled with

codependency because he had a deep need to please others” (McIntosh and Rima 132).

Samson became troubled in his leadership. Early on, Samson had problems with rebelliousness and self-destructive behavior, which are signs of codependency (Judg. 16:1-31).

### **Acknowledging the Dark Side**

Denial of the dark side is dangerous, but the good news is that Christian leaders do not have to wait for irreversible leadership failure before they can begin redeeming their dark side. The best time to begin redeeming one’s dark side is now. Overcoming the dark side involves more than acknowledging its presence and cause:

As Christians we believe that it is our fallen human nature that is the primary culprit when it comes to the creation of our dark side and our ability to deny its existence. Therefore, our dark side needs not only to be acknowledged; it ultimately must be redeemed and restored. We must acknowledge our sinfulness and seek the forgiveness and redemption that can be found only through Jesus Christ. As we deal with this primal cause of the dark side, the Holy Spirit of God will empower and direct us to overcome our dark side. However, even after taking these steps, we must be aware that we will be tempted to deny the periodic reemergence of our dark side. (McIntosh and Rima 166 -67)

The primal cause of the Christian leaders’ dark side is discovered in their families of origin and by working through unresolved attachment issues. The dark side will, on occasion, resurface; however, through Jesus Christ and the help of the Holy Spirit, Christian leaders are victorious. “Repentance begins by admitting I was wrong, that what I believed was not true. I choose not to believe that anymore, and I choose to believe the truth according to God’s Word and live accordingly from this day on” (Anderson, Zuehlke, and Zuehlke 111). Christian leaders have to dig deep within themselves to deal with the raw material that was used in making their dark sides. Once the raw materials of

the dark side have been identified, Christian leaders would be wise to use *metanoia*—a mind shift in leadership.

The term *metanoia* has a rich history. The Greeks used *metanoia* to mean a basic shift or change (*meta*—above and beyond as in metaphysics) of mind (*noia*—from the root *nous* of mind). In early Gnostic Christian tradition, the term *metanoia* meant an awakening of intuition of knowing the most high God. A biblical example of *metanoia* is John the Baptist's emphasis on repentance being a "shift or change of mind" (Senge 13; Steinke, *How Your Church Family* 144).

In order for Christian leaders to overcome their dark sides, they must achieve *metanoia* within themselves and practice a paradigm shift in leadership. In summary, steps to overcome the dark side of leadership are

1. Admitting that the dark side exists and understanding the shape it has taken in Christian leaders' lives;
2. Examining Christian leaders' pasts;
3. Resisting the poison of unrealistic expectations by confronting those imposed by others (McIntosh and Rima 181); and,
4. Practicing the discipline of self-knowledge through *metanoia*, including emotional intelligence and self-awareness.

The Overcoming the Dark Side of Leadership Self-Inventory in Appendix C assists those desiring to ascertain their personality traits. The dark side traits of Christian leaders, such as passive-aggressiveness, narcissism, compulsiveness, paranoia, and codependency, results in spiritual abuse and a toxic faith system in congregations and religious organizations.

### **Toxic Faith System**

Toxic faith concerns Christian leaders honoring themselves. This is defective faith distorts and taints the followers' view of God. Faith becomes toxic when individuals use God or religion for personal gain in profit, power, pleasure, or prestige. Faith is distorted or minimized and God is not the focus because Christian leaders seek personal gain.

Toxic faith systems leave people deeply wounded, and many are left to suffer alone after families, friends, and fortunes have been lost. "Toxic relationships leave you feeling gray inside and sometimes sick" (McLemore 19). All Christians have been victims of poisonous ideas at one time or another that distort the image of God and negate their faith. Christians can be victims of spiritual abuse sometimes by perpetrators who may not realize they are being spiritually abusive (Johnson and VanVonderen 19). No believer in a Christian community wants to admit being a part of a toxic faith system. A toxic faith system may begin as a healthy system. Spiritual abuse is an element of toxic faith in a toxic religious system supported by religious addicts.

Any faith experience, whether extreme or subtle, where profit, power, pleasure, or prestige become the primary goal will result in toxic faith and spiritual abuse (Arterburn and Felton 29). The average Christian tends to avoid the use of the term religious addiction because of its sinful connotations. Addiction goes beyond chemicals of drugs and alcohol and includes process addictions. An example of process addiction is workaholism. The goal of any addiction is to alter a person's reality (Arterburn and Felton 100).

Every addiction is destructive and distorts the person's relationship with God, which is very common in Christian leaders that over function. Christian leaders are trying

to find God through their Christian work (Arterburn and Felton 112 ). Spiritual abusers tend to ignore boundaries that tell them where they as a person stop and where other people begin. People who have misused their spiritual power have disrespected or beaten down the boundaries of others (Johnson and VanVonderen 47).

In a toxic faith system, two significant aspects exist: (1) Addiction and responsibility have never been mutually exclusive characteristics of a condition because to use the term addiction one has to take ownership of the problem and do something about it; and, (2) sin and addiction are not mutually exclusive conditions (Arterburn and Felton 101). Religious addicts are characterized by four aspects in their families of origin or nuclear families:

1. Rigid parents,
2. Experience of disappointment,
3. Low self-worth, and
4. Victims of abuse (32 -36).

A toxic faith system consists of at least two of ten characteristics: special claims about character, abilities, or knowledge; dictatorial and authoritarian leader; an us versus them mentality; punitive nature; overwhelming service; followers in pain; closed communication; legalism; no objective accountability; and, labeling (Arterburn and Felton 163-89). Spiritual abuse that occurs in a toxic faith system consists of people performing five roles. The five roles in a toxic faith system are persecutor , coconspirator, enabler, victim, and outcast . These patterns are described more fully in the following paragraphs.



### **Persecutor**

The persecutor begins as an unhealthy individual due to deprived or smothering parents. This person feels the need to defend against a sense of brokenness and fallibility. The persecutor resorts to self-reliance versus godly dependency and performance for good image and is an addictive workaholic (Arterburn and Felton 202 -13). The Christian leader as persecutor is usually narcissistic, passive-aggressive, codependent, or a combination of personality dysfunctions. The senior Christian leader is usually the persecutor.

### **Coconspirator**

The role of the coconspirator is the ultimate team player whose primary job is to make the persecutor look good by covering up or compensating for some major flaw in the persecutor's character or image. The coconspirator believes an evil plot exists to get the persecutor and establishes a personal mission to protect the persecutor at all costs. The coconspirator devises lies and distorts the truth to protect the persecutor. The coconspirator is actively involved in the delusion of others and connives to keep the persecutor in power. The coconspirator has a high probability of being a paranoid, compulsive leader, functioning in a complementary position. A coconspirator is different from an enabler. The coconspirator is usually the senior associate pastor or an elder.

### **Enabler**

The role of enablers is not active in direct deception but passive, allowing others and themselves to be victimized. Enablers function as the primary caretakers of the persecutor, performing ruthless work incognito for the persecutor and coconspirator. They resent this role but rarely complain. Enablers go along with the group consensus

and allow problems to continue until someone else speaks up. Enablers act out of survival and know what is happening is wrong while supporting the persecutor but hoping for change (Arterburn and Felton 221-23). Enablers can have codependent personalities operating in a similar or complementary functioning position with persecutor or coconspirator within the toxic faith system.

### **Victim**

Victims unknowingly and blindly support a toxic faith system, whether a church or family. Victims sacrifice and do everything with the desire to know and worship God, but they are misguided. Victims are manipulated by the persecutor, coconspirators, and enablers to keep the toxic faith system running and the persecutor in power. Victims lose themselves in church or family, never make a fuss, or disturb the homeostasis. Victims act as if the greatest privilege is to be a part of the group or family while they are being taken for granted and forgotten. Victims rely on the Christian leader to nurture them spiritually. "Spiritual molestation rapes the victims' minds of reason and strips them of their direct access to God. It takes away their self-respect and leaves them feeling broken" (Arterburn and Felton 228-30). A victim is more likely to be a compulsive and codependent personality.

### **Outcast**

The fifth role of a toxic faith system are the outcasts. Outcasts see the problem and confront it and are unwilling to be a part of the toxic system resulting them to becoming outcasts. Outcasts are forced to rebel and are labeled complainers, negative thinkers rather than team players because a toxic faith system will not tolerate those who challenge the integrity or disagree with the methods of the Christian leader (Arterburn

and Felton 236) . Outcasts in a toxic faith system are the only ones who are not religious addicts or possessors of toxic faith.

In the spiritually abusive toxic faith system, only Christian leaders are interpreters and deliverers of truth. These spiritually abusive religious systems load their language with a specially developed jargon understood only by those within the Christian community, causing the suppression of original thinking. Doctrine of the congregation or religious organization instead of valuing a person means having no individual reality apart from the group's reality. The paradigm of the group is paramount, and everything must conform to it or be disregarded.

The most extreme trait of a spiritually abusive faith system is dispensing of existence. Dispensing of existence occurs when the Christian leader decides who lives and who dies. This death may be physical, resulting in suicide or the destruction of the followers' spirit and emotional well-being. In spiritually abusive religious organizations, the spiritual effects of these cultic toxic faith practices and beliefs are common yet very devastating, causing lifelong issues with trust, loyalty, and faith (Damiani 43-45) in the Christian community.

### **Spiritually Abusive Systems**

For example, identifiable characteristics can be observed in all spiritually abusive systems:

1. Power-posturing : Leaders are more focused on their own authority as well as demanding others take note. Their spiritual authority is not real because it is not based on genuine godly character. Power is postured and authority is legislated.
2. Performance Preoccupation: The preoccupation with obedience and submission.
3. Unspoken Rules: In abusive spiritual systems, people's lives are controlled from the outside in by rules, spoken and unspoken.

4. Lack of Balance: Unbalanced approach to living out the truth of the Christian life in two extremes:
  - a. Authority is based upon the level of education and intellectual capacity alone, not on intimacy with God, obedience and sensitivity to the Holy Spirit.
  - b. What is true is decided based on feelings and experience.
5. Paranoia: Others will not understand what we are all about, so don't tell them.
6. Misplaced loyalty: Demanded because authority is assumed or legislated. They use scare tactics and humiliation, extreme fear.
7. Secretive: So image conscious. The leadership has a negative attitude towards the laity. (Johnson and VanVonderen 63-78)

A toxic faith system consists of toxic relationships. People move in and out of leadership styles, and their interpersonal flexibility is a benchmark of psychological healthiness.

However, each Christian leader tends to move toward certain styles called default styles.

Unfortunately, people who live in toxic relationships oftentimes operate from one or two of their default styles (McLemore 95).

Default style is a person's characteristic way of relating to others and is their fingerprint. "A default style is one to which an individual naturally reverts, especially under stress" (McLemore 96). The eight conventional styles of relating to other people are leading, nurturing, bonding, following, yielding, stonewalling, opposing, and competing. Within healthy relationships, toxicity can develop and result in Christian leaders using their unhealthy default style of controlling, intruding, freeloading, drifting, scurrying, avoiding, victimizing, and humiliating others (96). Default styles are toxic and parallel the five roles people play in a toxic faith system, which are persecutor, coconspirator, enabler, victim, and outcast, and the dark side of leadership flawed personalities, which are narcissistic, passive-aggressive, paranoid, codependent, and compulsive (see Table 2).

**Table 2. Flawed Personality Roles and Comparability**

<b>Toxic Faith System</b>	<b>Dark Side</b>	<b>Default Style</b>
Persecutor	Narcissistic	Controller, humiliator
Coconspirator	Passive aggressive	Intruder, victimizer
Enabler	Codependent	Drifter, freeloader
Victim	Compulsive	Scurrier
Outcast	Paranoid	avoider

The controller's main goal is to tell others what to do, how to think, and how to feel without being challenged. Drifters morph into whatever their malevolent master demands. Drifters usually do not make waves. They are status quo persons. The intruder is imposing, defensive, prideful, and without self-insight.

The freeloaders constantly search for others who will give them what they crave, such as large amounts of time, energy, attention, resources, and nurture. Freeloaders become totally enmeshed and fused to stronger people.

The humiliator is one who de means and belittles people. "The humiliator's goal is to turn people into envious and conquered rivals" (McLemore 174). They delight in exposing weaknesses and flaws in other people in order to elevate themselves at the expense of others. "Humiliators want fame, glory, wealth, eminence, talent, possessions, titles, offices—anything that allows them to extort the tribute they require" (179). A biblical example of a humiliator was Goliath. Goliath wanted to do more than win the battle. Goliath wanted to inflict psychological suffering on the Israelites (1 Sam. 17:4-11; McLemore 182). Another biblical example comes from Genesis 16:4: "When Hagar became pregnant, she despised her mistress Sarai" and ran away. God spoke to Hagar and she returned to Sarai.

Scurriers are whiners and appeasers. They are insecure and unassertive (McLemore 193). Scurriers love to play the role of helpless and defenseless victims. Scurriers oppress and abuse themselves, hoping others will not persecute them (193-94). A biblical example is Peter responding to a woman when Jesus was arrested in Luke 22:57: Peter declared, "Woman, I do not know the man." Peter fulfilled Jesus' prophecy that he would deny knowing Jesus three times before the rooster crowed.

Victimizers are people who injure and exploit others in menacing and dangerous ways (McLemore 208). Victimizers are calm, smooth, and charming people outwardly but have a strong potential to explode. They lack a sense of boundaries and believe they are entitled to what they obtain by force or persuasion. The victimizers' goal is to obtain what they can from others and inflict pain on others in the process (209). Biblical examples of victimizers are Joseph's brothers. Genesis 37:18 says, "His brothers spotted Joseph a long way off and conspired to kill him." Joseph's brothers had a spirit of jealousy among them.

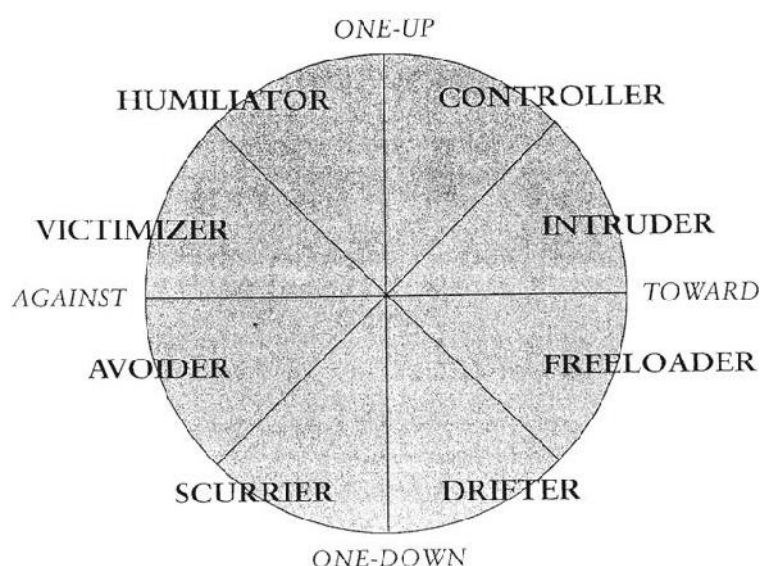
Avoiders fear humiliation and emotional anguish and are on guard against both physical and psychological injury. An avoiding style is hostile, hateful, contemptuous, and distrustful (McLemore 225). Avoiders are passive rebels. They are loners and may be social outcasts, ostracized and ridiculed. Avoiders' defense mechanisms are depersonalization, alienation, and isolation (234). A biblical example of avoiders is the people who instigated the crucifixion of Jesus (Matt. 27:20-25; McLemore 234). Another biblical example of an avoider is Jonah 1:3: "But instead of going to confront Nineveh, Jonah decided to run away."

Intruders' self-presentation is as competent, mature, dependable, predictable, caring, nurturing, and knowledgeable persons. Intruders are strong, protective, and long-suffering, willing to use guilt to ensure bonding. They expect others to be grateful but can be excessively stifling and can become resented by others. An other negative aspect of intruders is that they are imposing, defensive, prideful, and without personal insight. Unhealthy intruders tend to smother and overwhelm people (McLemore 136-37). Biblical examples of intruders are Job's three friends and fellow believers who came to Job and gave him their advice, which was not needed nor in tune with God (Job 2:11-13; 4:1-5:27).

Drifters lack their own identity. They gladly go along with people around them. They are uncertain, lack confidence, and insecure. They desire instruction and enlightenment by others. Drifters are compliant, timid, incapable of making a decision, and reactive rather than proactive. Drifters can transform into a robot and carry out the instructions of a malevolent master (McLemore 121). Drifters expect others to assume control. Drifters invoke in others advising and directing. Unfortunately, drifters give others status and power at their own expense (123). A biblical example of a drifter in the Old Testament is King Rehoboam who did evil and did not have a clear sense of self nor did he seek God (2 Chron. 12:13-14).

In unhealthy relationships, Christian leaders can divert to one of their unhealthy default styles of relating. In Figure 8, the toxic personality styles are on four axes: toward, against, one-up, and one-down. The two principal characteristics on which this study focused are the relational behavior axes one-up or one-down. On the behavior axes, when a person moves toward someone it is to be one-up (above them) or against to get

them one-down (below one). “Moving one-up means acting assertively and attempting to develop some form of superiority. Moving one-down implies deferring to someone else. Moving towards others implies warmth and willingness to make interpersonal connections. Moving away reflects emotional coolness” (McLemore 39). Coolness can turn into coldness and aggression or hostility, which is passive. Any of these personalities and roles can be paired.



Source: McLemore 99.

**Figure 8. Toxic personality styles.**

Three myths about behavioral changes need identification and eradication:

1. Change is fast and easy. Only two things bring about change in human personality; a dramatic life event that shakes a person to his or her very core such as the loss of a spouse or other loved one or a natural disaster or Christian conversion. The



premise that Christian leaders spiritually abuse their followers is not pleasant, neither is the belief that Christian leaders cannot positively change their leadership behavior.

2. Change results from the simple application of willpower. Some Christian leaders perceive they lack willpower. “The main problem with blaming our failings on lack of willpower is that, in doing so, we lose sight of the fact that willpower itself is a set of learned behaviors and a deeply ingrained set at that” (McLemore 246). With the help of God, bad leadership behavior can be changed to positive (246-49).

3. Insight guarantees change. People frequently have insights that result in major redirection of their lives. Insight either into oneself or others can trigger change and is sometimes essential for change to occur, but insight does not make a change inevitable.

Another formidable myth centers on education. If only people were better educated, the result would be more positive (McLemore 249). “While education certainly expands the mind, it does not necessarily bring about improvement in the soul” (249). Unfortunately, education does not change behavior. Education can be rejected or ignored. “Knowing thyself is sound advice but knowing yourself may or may not change you. Nor will insight necessarily change another person” (250). The results exhibited in the data results in this dissertation in some cases affirm that knowledge is not always acted upon.

Christian leaders are in a position to bring about positive behavioral changes in the Christian community by beginning with themselves then the followers :

You can change your behavior and, if you want, your personality. But you will probably not be able to do it in a weekend. Nor are you likely to be able to do it without help. Changing other people's behavior can be harder. And if they do not want to be have in new and different ways, you may not be able to change them at all. (McLemore 247)

Positive change in a Christian leaders' behavior is possible but they must want to change no matter how long it takes. The reality is every Christian leader faces the fact people may not want to positively change their behavior.

### **Biblical Framework**

Numerous passages in Scripture depict how people were harmed by an abusive spiritual system. Different forms of spiritual abuse can be subtle and blatant. Ezekiel 34, Matthew 23, and Jude inform the believer that all is not perfect in the Christian community. Many of the problems of the biblical religious leaders were selfishness and neglect of followers, which is spiritual abuse.

#### **Ezekiel 34**

Ezekiel is a Hebrew name meaning God strengthens or strengthened by God. Ezekiel was a priest who was called to be a prophet of the Lord. Ezekiel's prophetic ministry exhibited priestly emphases. Ezekiel was among the Israelites who were carried into Babylonian exile. God gave Ezekiel visions (Nelson 223). The book of Ezekiel is in the genre of apocalyptic writings, using symbolism, visions, allegories, parables, and symbolic actions (225).

God told Ezekiel to prophesy against the shepherds of Israel. The shepherds of Israel were the priests, Levites, princes, and magistrates who were in both the church and territory. They were prophesied against because they did not care for God's sheep. In essence, the shepherds included every leadership level in the church and the territory (Church 1009). The shepherds were self-focused, obtaining everything they wanted while the people were uncared for and suffered from negligence. The shepherds were not trustworthy and did great harm by not feeding the people of God (1069-70).

## Matthew 23

The Apostle Matthew is believed to have authored the book of Matthew even though he does not identify himself as author. Jesus' calling of Matthew, a tax collector, is recorded in Matthew 9:9 and again in Matthew 10:3.

Authoritarianism in the culture of Jewish society and the early Christian Church was a complex value system of divinely given law and cultural traditions. Authority in Jewish culture means that religious leaders are socially recognized and have the ability to approve or control the behavior of others (Pilch and Malina 11). The scribes' and Pharisees' authority was derived from this value system of authoritarianism. The authority of ordained clergy and other Christian leaders today is derived from given authority as well. Matthew 23 depicts what happens when persons of authority abuse others, even though they have the outward appearance of being holy and spiritually connected to God.

Honor and shame in Jewish tradition are important societal values. Honor is a claim to worth that is publicly acknowledged because it is a communal value. For the scribes and Pharisees to have honor, the community had to give it. To be shamed means individuals or groups claim of worth was publicly denied and repudiated (Pilch and Malina 95-96). In Matthew 23, the scribes and Pharisees lost honor. Unfortunately, today spiritually abusive leaders are rarely shamed or lose their honor.

Christians come to the Bible and read with a hermeneutics of faith, which can take different forms (Jasper 8). Jesus is in the temple at Jerusalem (Matt. 21:23-23:39) after he had retired from the city of Bethany. Jesus began his discourse by addressing the

multitude and his disciples about the roles of the scribes and the Pharisees and when to obey them. The scribes of the Pharisaical sect were the teachers of Moses' law.

Moses was the great judge and law giver in Israel. The meaning of sitting in the seat of Moses is a metaphor derived from the actual stone seat in the synagogue where the teacher as person of authority would sit. The term in this passage of Scripture refers to the scribes and Pharisees as the ones with official authority (Newman and Stine 702 ). The Pharisees had the greatest influence over the people. The chief priests were the Sadducees who did not appear to have as much influence as the scribes and Pharisees.

Jesus was talking to religious leaders as recorded in Matthew 23:4, when he said, "They tie up heavy loads, and put them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them." In Matthew 12:34 and 23:33, one of the ways Jesus characterized the abusers was as a "brood of vipers." Vipers are small deadly snakes that look like sticks (Johnson and VanVonderen 33). Matthew 23:33 says, "You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell?" These verses are strong examples of a spiritually abusive religious system in biblical times. In the midst of the eight woes, Jesus gives "hope" that the death of a false church can be averted if the scribes and Pharisees heed his warnings.

The peculiarity of Matthew 23 is Jesus' denunciation of the scribes and Pharisees, Jesus' lament over Jerusalem, and the description of Jerusalem's destruction. The Matthew 23 discourse occurred close to the end of Jesus' public ministry. The moral character of the scribes and Pharisees were called into question. Other scholars agree that the denunciation of the Pharisees is in Matthew 23:1-3, 5, 7b-10, 15-22, 24, 28, and 32-33.

The scribes and Pharisees professed to regard the law they taught and represented highly but neglected to live the law and carry out their responsibilities of the entire law to include justice, mercy, and faith. The scribes and Pharisees failed to demonstrate how the law was given by God as a privilege not a burden to be carried by the people. Verses 13 - 32 are the eight woes that illustrate how the Pharisees were *saying* and *not* doing or living. The *swearing by* discourse (vv. 16-33) does not refer to legal oaths but the unnecessary use of divine things in everyday life. In verse 25, the verb used regarding the vessels, the cup and dish, signifies that the contents were obtained immorally (Driver, Plummer, and Briggs 244-47). Verse 25 also addresses the obsessive focus on ceremonial cleanness more than internal cleansing. The cup, dish, and sepulchers are metaphors for unclean people.

Matthew 23 profoundly exhibits and identifies that biblical religious leaders spiritually abused the people of God. The sad commentary is that some Christian leaders today are continuing to abuse God's people spiritually.

### **Epistle Jude**

The letter of Jude is small, yet powerful. This letter is rarely mentioned or used in sermons. Jude identifies himself in verse one as the servant of Jesus Christ and the brother of the Apostle James but does not state he is the half brother of Jesus Christ. Jude begins his letter dealing with the psychology of leadership or the theology of leadership (Wright 4).

Jude was writing to the average church members. Jude warned the church about those who had crept in among them, seeking as leaders to influence the entire Christian

community unduly but leading everyone in the wrong direction. These false leaders astonished Jude (Wright 9).

In Pauline and non-Pauline epistles, the problem of false teachers among the church is confronted or emphatically implied. Also, Jude speaks profoundly to the false leaders who had entered the church. Jude gives a strong and direct denunciation of the false leaders in the church. This powerful letter lays out four major sections:

1. Verses 1-4, the purpose of Jude;
2. Verses 5-16, description of the false teachers;
3. Verses 17-23, defense against false teachers; and,
4. Verses 24-25, Jude's doxology (Nelson 479-80).

Jude clearly identifies himself as a servant of Jesus Christ and delineates the roles, characteristics, and harm the false leaders were causing among the church.

Jude denotes three prerequisites for leadership in the Christian community: (1) the knowledge of whom one is, loved by God; (2) survival, kept by Jesus Christ; and, (3) the meaning of existence, called by God (Wright 5). Jude used five images to convey his message. Jude presents within those images five principles for servant leadership:

1. Leadership is about influence and service. Jude's first image in verse 12 says, "Shepherds who feed only themselves." These leaders use their power for their own benefit. Jude confronts the false leaders in the community, focusing on the same leadership problems six hundred years earlier in Ezekiel 34.

2. Leadership is about vision and hope. Jude's second image depicts servant leaders as "clouds without rain, blown along by the wind" (v. 12). Jude accuses the false

leaders of promising a future to the people but not delivering it. Christian leaders are too intent on following their own desires.

3. Leadership is about character and trust. The third image describes “autumn trees without fruit, uprooted —twice dead. Trees without roots produce no fruit” (v. 12). The leadership of the false teachers did not produce growth (Wright 15). True godly relationships are full of trust. Leadership that produces fruit is rooted in the character of the leader.

4. Leadership is about relationships and power. The fourth image depicts “wild waves of the sea, foaming up their shame” (v. 13), Jude captures power, purpose, and relationship. These false leaders were causing turmoil but not accomplishing anything or going anywhere. Their actions were destructive to the Christian community and left people’s lives in pieces. “Leadership is a relationship of power” (Wright 16). In other words, the false leaders were inwardly focused on doing everything to build themselves up at the expense of the followers.

5. Leadership is about dependency and accountability. Jude’s fifth image, verse 13, says, “wandering stars, for whom the blackest darkness has been reserved forever.” The false leaders were like shooting stars in the night sky onto the scene only to disappear with a flash. They come on the scene only to fizzle out (Wright 17).

Jude strongly advocates servant leadership:

[Jude’s] little letter offers us two contrasting pictures of a servant leader. On the one hand, we see Jude, humbly pointing away from himself describing himself as a servant, rather than claiming his legitimate status as a brother of the Lord. On the other hand, we see the active and visible leaders of the community using their roles for their own benefit, growing fat off the flock. Shepherds who feed on ly themselves. Shepherds are there for the sheep! Shepherds by definition are servants entrusted with the care

of the flock . It is a position of responsibility and service, not status power.” (24)

Jude is the epitome of a humble servant leader. He warns Christian leaders who are only concerned about themselves. God is not the focus of these Christian leaders’ ministry.

According to Jude, the characteristics of servant leadership are mercy, peace, and love. Jude’s prayer in verse two is for mercy, peace, and love . “If we are going to be servant leaders we need to be lovers, peacemakers and keepers of commitments” (Wright 10). Christian leaders must possess three characteristics: mercy, peace , and love .

Leadership is a relationship between two people where one person tries to influence another. These Christian leaders impact the follower’s attitudes, behavior, vision, and values (13). Formal leadership of Christian leaders as a shepherd is through two things: (1) the mission of the church or group , and (2) care and nurture of the community (13-14).

Jude ends his letter by highlighting four sources of power available to servant leaders :

1. The content of God ’s Word—“building yourselves up on your most holy faith” (v. 20).

2. The communion of the Spirit—continues saying, “praying in the Holy Spirit” (v. 20) meaning servant leaders are to live in the presence and power of God in Christ through the Holy Spirit (Wright 9).

3. A covenant in Christ directs—“keep yourselves in the love of God” (v. 21) while you wait for the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ to bring eternal life. “The servant leader is one who trusts in the mercy of God—who knows that God reaches out in Christ



to provide the very obedience that we cannot live up to ourselves” (Wright 20). This covenant affirms the human need for mercy.

4. A calling to commitment. Once the servant leader experiences God’s covenantal faithfulness, they are to be merciful to others. Servant leaders are called to be faithful in their relationships in the body of Christ (Wright 20).

Jude explained how to defend against false leaders and ends the letter with a doxology.

A philosophy that can help avoid spiritual abuse in the Christian community is the art of enrollment. It brings about a total shift of posture, perceptions, beliefs, and thought processes, which require dedication, a leap of faith, and practice to bring about healthy transformation based on mental mappings (Zander and Zander 10). The skill of enrollment invites others to partner in leadership to establish a growing and thriving ministry. Enrollment is not forcing, cajoling, tricking, bargaining, pressuring, or guilt-tripping people into doing something a certain way. Often these tactics are used by church leaders to enlist volunteers. “Enrollment is the art and practice of generating a spark of possibility for others to share” by empowering them to do meaningful ministry (125). Enrollment is exhortation. “The practice of enrollment is about giving yourself as a possibility to others and being ready, in turn, to catch their spark” (126). Therefore, enrollment is about being on a team, partnering together in ministry.

Christian leaders’ “experience of a personal crisis or a failure will constitute a basis for the creation of a personal vision, which in turn becomes the framework for a life of possibility” (Zander and Zander 174). This life of possibility helps Christian leaders answer God’s call to make a significant difference in the world by doing ministry to glorify God.

### **Research Design**

I selected a mixed method explanatory research design with semi-structured interviews as the best process to evaluate the curriculum created for Christian leaders preparing for Christian ministry in seminary and congregational leaders.

I selected a longitudinal survey design with a panel study. The panel study collected data from participants at two points in time. The two points marked the pretest and the posttest (Wiersma and Jurs 160-61). Collecting qualitative data in Phase Two became prudent to understand better the participants and their behavioral changes. Therefore, a semi-structured interview was conducted two months after the teaching of the spiritual abuse curriculum.

### **Summary**

Spiritual abuse frequently occurs in the Christian community. It crosses the boundaries of denominations, religious organizations, and demographics. The perpetrators of spiritual abuse are Christian leaders who are not healthy, stemming from their families of origin, immediate families, congregations, and the Christian community.

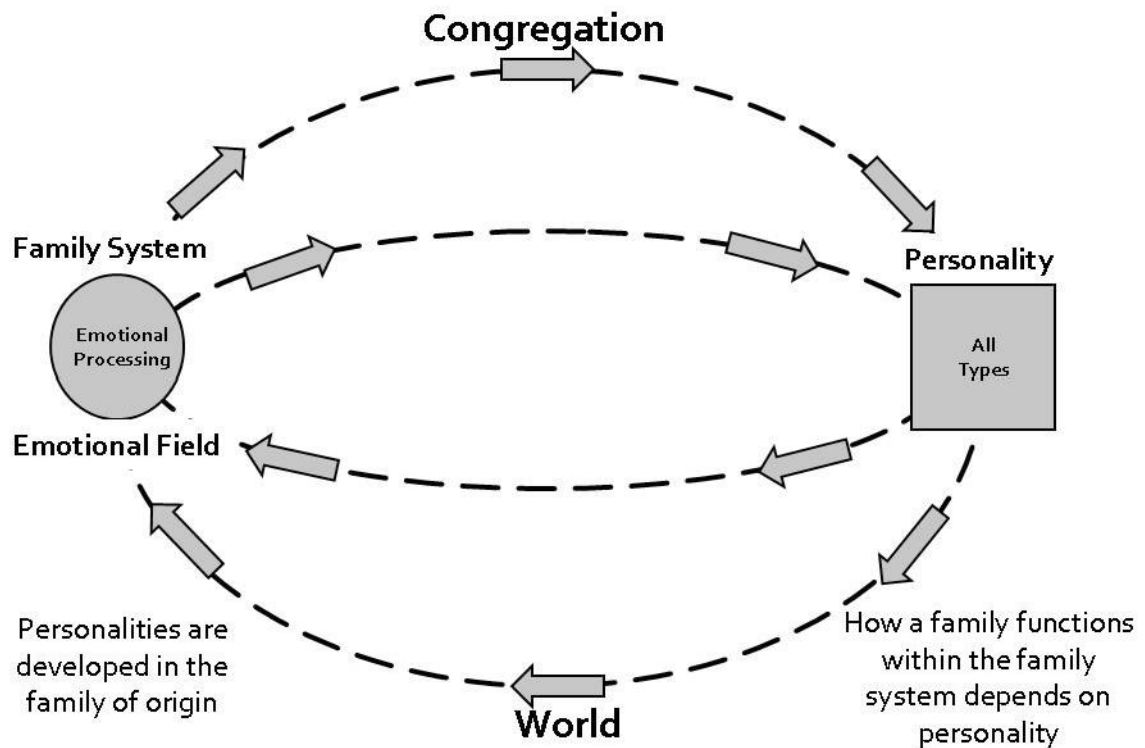
Spiritual abuse existed during the time of Jesus' ministry on earth. The Epistle Jude and Matthew 23 clearly depict how Jesus identified the Jewish religious leaders as causing harm and hardship on followers. Jesus dealt with the Jewish religious leaders openly, directly, and honestly. Spiritual abuse happens when Christian leaders use their spiritual position, power, and authority to control, dominate, and force followers to live up to a spiritual standard without considering the followers' well-being. Spiritual abuse results in authority pronouncing judgment (Johnson and VanVonderen 20-21). Continued deep personal change in Christian leaders is vital for healthy ministry. Spiritual

discernment and prayer are the foundation of Christian leaders being in tune with God's will. In the Christian journey, all Christian leaders are endeavoring to climb the leadership ladders of capacity and character.

Family systems theory explained how emotional and relationship systems are a part of Christian leaders' larger family system, resulting in them functioning in certain patterns. In a family system and congregational system, Christian leaders can function better if they are differentiated, recognize triangles and detriangle and if they learn how to process unresolved emotional attachments. Spiritual abuse happens when Christian leaders have not completed their family of origin work and so repeat bad behavior patterns consciously or unconsciously. Unhealthy Christian leaders seek to solve their personal issues in congregations or religious organizations.

Family of origin work must be done by Christian leaders in order to understand their dark side, which was formed in early childhood. Christian leaders are to ascertain what blocks are missing in their hierarchy of needs. Christian leaders must work to recognize their dark side and determine if they are part of a toxic faith system or if they exhibit toxic personality styles.

Figure 9 illustrates how the family systems theory and the dark side theory are not linear but cyclical. Wise Christian leaders identify their personality dysfunctions such as the narcissistic, passive-aggressive, paranoid, compulsive, and codependent pattern in order to reclaim themselves for use in God's kingdom work. Primal leadership is a key factor along with emotional intelligence, which is self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship.



**Figure 9. Theory integration model.**

Unhealthy Christian leaders spiritually abuse followers and produce unhealthy congregations and religious organizations. They lack humility. These Christian leaders do not practice primal leadership, *metanoia*, or perichoresis.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **Problem and Purpose**

I have experienced and observed in Christian communities the prevalent occurrence of Christian leaders spiritually abusing their followers, knowingly and unknowingly, through nefarious acts. Spiritual abuse occurs when both paid and unpaid leaders as persons of authority distort the truth and use manipulation and intimidation.

The purpose of this study was to evaluate a newly developed spiritual abuse curriculum through quantitative and qualitative measures. The spiritual abuse curriculum was designed to raise the level of understanding spiritual abuse in the Christian community.

#### **Research Questions**

Research questions for this study are as follows :

##### **Research Question #1**

What was the knowledge and attitude of Christian leaders in regard to spiritual abuse?

Research question #1 helped to determine the awareness and attitude each Christian leader possessed prior to being taught the spiritual abuse curriculum in order to assess its effectiveness. This spiritual abuse curriculum was used to inform and equip Christian leaders better for healthy ministry in the future.

##### **Research Question #2**

How did Christian leaders change in their knowledge, attitude, and behavior about spiritual abuse through the implementation of a spiritual abuse curriculum?

The curriculum was developed from the literature review. The curriculum included teaching the character of a godly leader, the theological framework for a healthy leader, family systems theory, congregational theory, personality dysfunction, and the toxic faith system identifying Christian leaders who are prone to abuse followers.

### **Research Question #3**

How effective was the teaching of the spiritual abuse curriculum?

Research question #3 was vital in ascertaining whether the teaching aided or detracted from the learning process of the participants. The teaching style greatly affected the effectiveness of the taught spiritual abuse curriculum. People have different learning styles; therefore, I incorporated visual and auditory stimulation by using electronic media through PowerPoint and video clips as well as lectures to teach spiritual abuse. The spiritual abuse concepts were conveyed in a non-accusatory manner to enhance the participants' positive perception.

### **Participants**

Originally, I sought participants for this study at Andover Theological Seminary by contacting four professors but was unsuccessful. My Research Reflection Team suggested I present the curriculum at my alma mater, AUSOT, which I did.

### **Anderson University School of Theology History**

In 1917, AU was established as Anderson Bible Training School. University status was later achieved as a Christian higher education institution. The AUSOT was developed as a graduate division of advanced professional preparation for ministry in 1950. In 1965, the AUSOT received full accreditation from the Association of Theological Schools and the Higher Learning Commission, North Central Association.

AUSOT continues to maintain a high status of Christian higher education. AUSOT is the only Church of God (Anderson) institute of graduate studies.

I spoke with Dr. David Sebastian, Dean, AUSOT, and obtained his permission to approach seminary professors and invite their classes to be participants in this study. Dean Sebastian was gracious and explained that each professor would make his or her own decision about whether or not to be a part of any study.

I contacted three professors whose seminary students had a focus concerning Christian Leadership or Master of Divinity. I electronically contacted Dr. James Lewis, THST 7340, Ethics for the Vocation of Ministry; Dr. John Aukerman, PAST 7470, Leadership; and, Dr. Guy Brewer, PAST 5450, Foundation of Pastoral Ministry, requesting their help to evaluate the curriculum I developed on spiritual abuse. I requested two hours of class time to teach a spiritual abuse curriculum that I developed from my research. Class participation would involve the pretest and posttest surveys. Also, I needed their support in encouraging students to complete the pretest and posttest survey and follow-up interviews in two months. All three professors agreed to allow their classes to participate in this study.

### **Church of God Congregational History**

I identified a Church of God (CHOG) congregation (Anderson) to ascertain their knowledge and experience with the phenomenon of spiritual abuse in a congregational setting. In the 1950s, three people had a vision to develop a church. The new church plant was approved by the local Church of God Ministerial Association and national headquarters. The first worship service was held October 1955 in a local minister's home with twenty-four people attending. One year later they moved into a new building. By

1971, the congregation grew to 125. Today, this CHOG congregation has 140 members. They built a larger sanctuary in 2008. Church leadership consists of a board of seven elders selected by the congregation, and four part-time pastoral staff: a senior pastor, a minister of visitation, a youth pastor, and a minister of discipleship and education. Ten congregational Christian leaders from this CHOG congregation participated in this study.

Participants in the four groups totaled thirty-seven Christian leaders in Christian ministry or preparing for ministry. Twenty-seven of the thirty-seven participants were in AUSOT classes and ten were Christian leaders from the CHOG congregation (see Table 3). Seventeen of the twenty-seven participants were AUSOT seminarians. I learned from Dr. Aukerman two weeks before teaching the spiritual abuse curriculum that three participants were in two of the three classes. Therefore, the participants were instructed to select one of the classes in which to take the survey. Initially, the sample size goal for this study was fifty participants. However, the total participants in this study were twenty-three.

**Table 3. Test Sample Size**

Group	AUSOT Students	Church Leaders
Sample size	27	10

A purposeful sample was drawn from both the seminary and congregational leaders (Creswell and Clark 2008). “Purposeful sampling means that researchers intentionally select participants who have experience with the central phenomenon or the key concept being explored” (112). As researcher, I identified a small number of Christian leaders for this survey. These Christian leaders were full-time and part-time



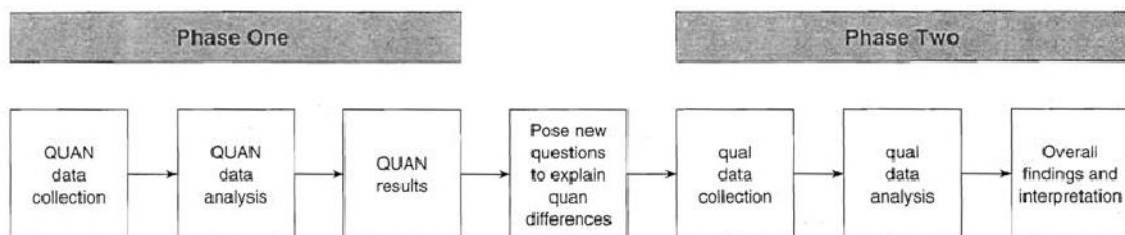
students as well as church leaders such as team leaders. Some were employed part -time, full-time or bi-vocationally, and some were volunteer Christ ian leaders. The part icipants were also male and fema le of various ages. Part icipants were also at different exper ience levels in Christian m inistry.

### Research Desi gn

This study u sed a mixed met hod nonexperimental explanatory design consisting of two phases—quantitative followed by q ualitative (see Figure 10).

In this study design, first the quantitati ve numeric data was collected using an electronic survey. The second phase in the sequence was the collection and analysis of qualitative text data to help expla in or elaborate on the q uantitative results obtained in the first phase. The qual itative phase builds on the qua ntitative phase , and the two p hases were connected in the intermediate stage of the study.

The rationale for this approach is that the quantitative data and its subsequent analysis provided a general cognitive understanding of the research problem. The qualitative data and its analysis refine and expla in those statistica l results by exploring participants' views and personal experiences in more depth (Cr eswell and Clar k 71, 87).



Source: Creswe ll and Clar k 51.

**Figure 10. Explanatory design model.**

I designed a longitudinal pretest and posttest survey and semi-structured interview protocol. In longitudinal panel study, the sample is measured two or more times to determine net change and specific individuals who changed (Wiersma and Jurs 161). The survey was designed to use interval scale of measurement (Fowler 90). The survey and semi-structured interviews documented the knowledge, attitude and opinion, and behavior of participants after being taught the spiritual abuse curriculum.

### **Instrumentation**

I designed the survey from the literature review and consulted with my mentor, Research Reflection Team, and Dr. Aukerman, professor at AUSOT and expert of electronic surveys. The survey, entitled Protestant Christian Leadership Survey (see Appendix A). The Research Reflection Team, my mentor, and my field mentor pilot tested the survey, and adjustments were made.

The survey was administered prior to the intervention of the spiritual abuse curriculum. The same survey was readministered two weeks after the intervention. I utilized the Likert scale to measure the effectiveness of the curriculum. The survey measured three aspects of the participants: the changed scores in knowledge, in attitude and opinion, and in behavior regarding spiritual abuse in the Christian community. The pretest established the baseline of the participants, and the posttest evaluated the effectiveness of the spiritual abuse curriculum.

Phase two of the explanatory method collected data using qualitative semi-structured interviews. The three interview questions and protocol obtained an in-depth look at the participants' views and personal experiences with spiritual abuse (see Appendix D). The semi-structured interviews were conducted with ten participants who

were pastors, church leaders, or students preparing for Christian leadership. Five from the three seminary classes and five from the congregational leaders comprised the volunteer participant group in phase two. The interviews occurred two months after teaching the newly created spiritual abuse curriculum.

### **Independent Variables**

The independent variable was the spiritual abuse curriculum taught to participants to ascertain the effectiveness of the newly created curriculum (see Appendix B). I developed the spiritual abuse curriculum from the literature review.

### **Dependent Variables**

The dependent variables representing the output of the process are called dependent variables (Saslow 52). The independent variables determined the participants' knowledge, attitudes and opinions, and behavior regarding spiritual abuse to assess the impact of the independent variable. The changes presented in participants' scores showed their level of knowledge, attitudes and opinions, and behavior affected by the spiritual abuse curriculum.

### **Intervening Variables**

The intervening variables were church affiliations, gender, age, and years of Christian ministry experience. Commissioned, licensed, ordained, part-time, full-time and bi-vocational Christian ministry statuses were all intervening variables. In the Church of God tradition, commissioning is the first step in the credentialing process for those called to Christian ministry. Licensing is the second step in credentialing and is required to achieve ordination. The participants' faith tradition was an intervening variable as well.

Another intervening variable was the teacher and teaching style. The participants' learning style was also a factor.

### **Scale of Measurement**

The scale of measurement was defined prior to any measurements and observations were accomplished. This study used a Likert type scale that provided an interval scale of measurement for twenty-nine questions (Wiersma and Jurs 323). Each item had a set of responses on a five-point scale with assigned numerical values ranging from 1 to 5.

My field mentor, Dr. Juanita Leonard, retired AUSOT professor, recommended Dr. McMurray, AU, to assist me in analyzing my statistics because he assisted AUSOT Doctor of Ministry students. I contacted Dr. McMurray and he referred me to Dr. Griffin, AU professor of statistics. Dr. Griffin recommended one of his graduating students to analyze my survey. I contacted and met the student clarifying what I needed. Dr. Aukerman, AUSOT, used the SurveyMonkey program and provided the survey results in Excel spreadsheets, which were electronically forwarded to the data consultant. The data consultant used Microsoft Excel spreadsheets and SYSTAT software to provide the t-test results.

### **Reliability and Validity**

The reliability scores of the Protestant Christian Leadership Survey given to seminarians and congregational leaders were 0.7 or higher. The validity scores of the pilot test with my mentors and Research Reflection Team proved to be understood as intended and measured the truthfulness of the instrument.

### **Data Collection**

The intent of the explanatory sequential design is to use qualitative data to provide more detail about the quantitative results and to employ purposeful sampling that can best provide this detail (Creswell and Clark 122). In the spring 2009, I obtained permission and support from AUSOT professors of the three classes to include their students in this study as well as permission from the CHOG senior pastor to allow the inclusion of church leaders.

The first phase of quantitative data gathering was accomplished by using a longitudinal panel survey I created. This survey was used as the pretest and posttest. The SurveyMonkey program, managed by Dr. Aukerman, AUSOT, allowed electronic dissemination of the survey. I electronically disseminated the pretest to the professors and senior pastor of the congregation two weeks prior to the spiritual abuse presentation. They forwarded the pretest electronic link to their students and Christian leaders one week before the sessions, requesting completion within three to five days. I performed the spiritual abuse presentation (see Appendix B).

I presented the spiritual abuse PowerPoint presentation in all three AUSOT classes on the appropriate date in March 2009. During the break of PAST 5450, Foundations of Pastoral Ministry, one student, a pastor, came up to me. He was very affirming and appreciated my research on spiritual abuse, but he said, "Why not call spiritual abuse what it is, sin?" I expressed that my goal was to present my research information without taking that approach. Two weeks following the spiritual abuse

presentation, I electronically disseminated the posttest to the professors and senior pastor, who forwarded the posttest to the participants, requesting completion within three to five days.

Two months later, I contacted those AUSOT students who signed up for the follow-up interview in order to schedule a date and time. Two months after the spiritual abuse presentation to CHOG leaders, I spoke at church with each of the individuals that signed up for a follow-up interview.

The second phase of qualitative data gathering was conducted through semi-structured interviews two months following the posttest (see Appendix D). The qualitative participants were self-selected from the four teaching venues. At the end of each teaching session, I asked participants if they were interested in having a fifteen or twenty minute follow-up interview on the spiritual abuse presentation and, if so, to sign their names and contact information on a sheet I circulated.

At the time of the interviews, I obtained the participants' verbal consent to audiotape them and take notes of the interviews. I informed the participants that the interviews would be treated anonymously and if a portion of their interviews were used in the dissertation, they would remain anonymous. After the completion of the study, the tapes and notes were safely stored.

I conducted ten semi-structured interviews. The typed transcripts provided a more personal perspective of their experience with spiritual abuse and helped ascertain what they remembered from the curriculum. I used a Theme Coding Sheet (see Appendix E) to document the semi-structured interviews (see Appendices F and G).

Data collection occurred over a three -month period at three different intervals. In both ministry contexts, secondary and congregation. The three intervals of data collection included the pretest, posttest, and semi-structured interviews.

### **Data Analysis**

In order to protect the psychological well-being of the participants, the data collection process was anonymous. In data analysis the participants used the last four digits of their identification number or social security number, which allowed them to remain anonymous.

I engaged a statistician to obtain appropriate analysis of the surveys to answer the research questions. The method of analysis for this study was a t-test. “In an analysis, the degrees-of-freedom are the number of ways the data are free to vary. Operationally, degrees-of-freedom are determined by subtracting the number of restrictions placed on the data from the number of scores,  $n - 1$ ” (Wiersma and Jurs 382) . The t-test is comprised of a family of distributions determined by a degrees -of-freedom value (383).

The survey items were analyzed under three categories to answer the research questions. The categories are (1) knowledge, (2) attitude and opinion, and (3) behavior. The knowledge category calculated responses to survey questions 1, 2, 11, 13, 16, 17, 18, 20, 22, 27, and 29. The attitude and opinion category calculated responses to survey questions 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 14, 15, 24, 25, 26, and 28. The behavior category calculated responses to survey questions 8, 9, 10, 12, 19, 21, and 23. Survey questions 24 through 44 were demographic questions. The last survey question, 45, was opened-ended. The data consultant and I explored the data results.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **FINDINGS**

The purpose of this study was to develop and evaluate a spiritual abuse curriculum and to raise the awareness level of spiritual abuse in the Christian community.

#### **Research Questions**

Three research questions helped fulfill this purpose.

##### **Research Question #1**

What was the knowledge and attitude of Christian leaders in regard to spiritual abuse?

##### **Research Question #2**

How did Christian leaders change in their knowledge, attitude, and behavior about spiritual abuse through the implementation of a spiritual abuse curriculum?

##### **Research Question #3**

How effective was the teaching of the spiritual abuse curriculum?

#### **Profile of the Participants**

The use of student identification numbers and church leaders' last four digits of their Social Security numbers resulted in a major problem in data analysis. Some participants did not remember or record the same numbers on their pretest and posttest as instructed, which resulted in many tests not being matched. Therefore, ten of the twenty-seven AUSO T students and four of the ten congregational leaders were omitted, decreasing the total number of participants in this study to twenty-three. Basic demographic data was collected as part of the Christian Leadership Survey, such as



gender, age, education, ethnicity, marital status, religious affiliation, ministry position and ministry experience (see Appendixes H and I).

### **Intervening Variables**

A number of intervening variables may have influenced the outcome of data collected by the assessment instrument, the Christian Leadership Survey.

#### **Gender**

Overall, 61 percent of the participants were females, and 39 percent were males. Further breakdown of AUSOT students show 52 percent were females, and 47 percent were males. In the congregation, 83 percent were females and 17 percent were males.

#### **Age**

The overall median age of all the participants was 37 years. More specifically, the mean age of AUSOT students was 30, and the mean age of congregation leaders was 53. The AUSOT students between the ages of 23 -30 were 63 percent and 38 percent were between the ages of 31-42. All congregational leaders were between the ages of 47-65.

#### **Education**

The participants had four options to select their current educational background: undergraduate, graduate, postgraduate degrees earned. All twenty-three participants had an undergraduate four-year degree, one had a graduate degree, and one had a postgraduate degree. All of the AUSOT students and two-thirds of the congregational leaders had accredited bachelor degrees. One AUSOT student held a graduate degree, and one congregational leader held a postgraduate degree (Doctor of Ministry). Two participants in this study failed to indicate their education, perhaps because their education was below a four-year degree.

### **Race/Ethnicity**

Sixteen of the AUSOT students and all six of the congregational leaders were Anglo, and one AUSOT student was African-American totaling twenty-three participants.

### **Marital Status**

Seven categories were given to participants to select their marital status: never married; first marriage; married, previously divorced; married, previously widowed; married, separated; divorced; and , widowed. Nine of the AUSOT students were in their first marriage, two were married but previously divorced, five were never married, and one was divorced. Three congregational participants were in their first marriage; one was married, previously divorced; one was divorced; and , one was widowed.

### **Religious Affiliation**

All participants except one were CHOG. One AUSOT student was nondenominational.

### **Ministry Positions**

Participants selected one of eight categories to identify their current ministry positions: solo senior pastor, senior pastor, associate pastor, ministry director, lay leader, teacher, chaplain, and other. Nine AUSOT students and five church leaders (61 percent) identified themselves as unpaid lay leaders. Two participants were senior pastors : one AUSOT student was a solo senior pastor, and the other senior pastor had ministerial staff. Two were ministry directors, one was a chaplain, two were full-time AUSOT students, and one other was unidentified. All participants' ministry positions were unpaid

volunteers except the two paid senior pastors. The AUSOT student was the full-time solo senior pastor and the other senior pastor was bi-vocational part-time.

### **Ministry Experience**

Ministry experience was determined by years of Christian service identified at question #42 of the survey. The AUSOT students' years in ministry ranged from one to sixteen years with a mean of 5.25 years. However, the congregational leaders' mean of ministry experience was twenty years.

Among the AUSOT students, three female students had the greatest years of ministry experience with ten, sixteen, and ten years. The average years of experience for these female AUSOT students were twelve years. However, the overall years of experience among AUSOT females were six years, which is greater than the male students' overall years of experience that was four years. Only one of seven male AUSOT students had more than five years of ministry experience, which was eight years.

### **Dependent Variables**

I made the assumption that the AUSOT students would improve the most in all three areas, knowledge, attitude, and behavior, because they were in a learning environment. The t-test revealed the opposite. The AUSOT students' survey revealed that their knowledge level changed such that 0.0657, which does not meet the threshold of  $= .05$  criteria (see Table 4, p. ). However, the one-tail p-value is moving in the right direction. If the sample size were larger, the results would be below or equal to a .05 probability of error. The congregational leaders' knowledge level improved significantly to 0.0045. A significant positive change in AUSOT students was indicated in their behavior with the result of 0.0194 (see Table 4).

**Table 4. Dependent T-Test (One Tail)**

Group	Knowledge ... P-Value	D/F*	Attitude· P-Value	D/F*	Behavior Ò P-Value	D/F*
AUSOT students n=17	0.0657	10	0.3828	10	0.0194	6
Church lead ers n=6	0.0045	10	0.1607	10	0.1019	6
Combined n=23	0.0012	21	0.1610	21	0.4055	13

\*D/F=Degrees of Freedom

...Items 1, 2, 11, 13, 16, 17, 20, 22, 27, 29

· Items 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 14, 15, 24, 25, 26, 28

ÒItems 8, 9, 10, 12, 19, 21, 23

The mean score of the Christian Leadership Survey posttest of the AUSOT students and congregational leaders exceeded their mean score of their pretest. The overall results indicated greater knowledge was gained as explained by the higher mean score. Some Christian leaders that have not been exposed to spiritual abuse are less concerned about the phenomenon because they believe spiritual abuse does not apply to them. Other Christian leaders may deny the existence of spiritual abuse and, therefore, ignore the phenomenon in their ministry context.

### **Research Question #1**

What was the knowledge and attitude of Christian leaders in regard to spiritual abuse?

#### **Knowledge**

Survey question #1 provided the participants' baseline for their knowledge of spiritual abuse. For survey question #1, "I have heard about spiritual abuse," AUSOT students had pretest scores indicating 47 percent agreed, 12 percent strongly agreed, 29

percent were uncertain, and 12 percent disagreed. Students' posttest scores significantly and positively changed to those who had heard about spiritual abuse increased.

CHOG leaders' pretest scores showed that 17 percent agreed, 66 percent were uncertain, and seventeen strongly disagreed. The church leaders' posttest scores significantly changed indicating that all participants had heard about spiritual abuse (see Table 5).

**Table 5. Question #1—I Have Heard about Spiritual Abuse**

	AUSOT		CHOG	
	Pre %	Post %	Pre %	Post %
Strongly Agree	12	100		
Agree	47		17	100
Uncertain	29		66	
Disagree	12			
Strongly Disagree			17	

For survey question #17, "I have been spiritually abused by Christian leaders," AUSOT students had pretest scores indicating 12 percent strongly agreed, 18 percent agreed, 17 percent were uncertain, 47 percent disagreed, and 6 percent strongly disagreed. AUSOT students' posttest scores showed that 53 percent disagreed, 12 percent strongly disagreed, 11 percent were uncertain, 12 percent agreed, and 12 percent strongly agreed (see Table 6).

CHOG leaders' pretest scores indicated that 50 percent disagreed, 33 percent strongly disagreed, and 17 percent were uncertain. Church leaders' posttest scores

showed that 67 percent disagreed, 16 percent were uncertain, and 17 percent agreed that they had been abused spiritually by Christian leaders (see Table 6).

**Table 6. Question #17—I Have Been Spiritually Abused by a Christian Leader**

	AUSOT		CHOG	
	Pre %	Post %	Pre %	Post %
Strongly Agree	12	12		
Agree	18	12		17
Uncertain	17	11	17	16
Disagree	47	53	50	67
Strongly Disagree	6	12	33	

For the purpose of this study, I did not consider question #18, “I have spiritually abused others,” as behavior because I was trying to establish willful knowledge. Survey question #18 provided significant insight into how the participants viewed their leadership role in the phenomenon of spiritual abuse. The AUSOT students had pretest scores indicating that 41 percent strongly disagreed, 29 percent disagreed, 24 percent were uncertain, and 6 percent strongly agreed. SOT students’ posttest scores showed 35 percent strongly disagreed, 41 percent disagreed, 18 percent were uncertain, and 6 percent agreed (see Table 7).

CHOG leaders’ pretest scores indicated that 67 percent strongly disagreed and 33 percent disagreed. Church leaders’ posttest scores show that 50 percent strongly disagreed and 50 percent disagreed (see Table 7).

**Table 7. Question #18—I Have Spiritually Abused Others**

	AUSOT		CHOG	
	Pre %	Post %	Pre %	Post %
Strongly Agree	6			
Agree		6		
Uncertain	24	18		
Disagree	29	41	33	50
Strongly Disagree	41	35	67	50

For survey question #11, “I believe unresolved family issues cause spiritual abuse,” is an important theory in this study. AUSOT students’ pretest scores indicate that 35 percent agreed, 6 percent strongly agreed, 47 percent were uncertain, and 12 percent disagreed. Students had posttest scores showing that 53 percent agreed, 12 percent strongly agreed, 17 percent were uncertain, 6 percent disagreed, and 12 percent strongly disagreed (see Table 8).

CHOG leaders’ pretest scores revealed that 33 percent agreed and 67 percent were uncertain. Church leaders’ posttest scores indicate 50 percent agreed, 33 percent were uncertain, and 17 percent disagreed that unresolved family issues cause spiritual abuse (see Table 8).

**Table 8. Question #11—I Believe Unresolved Family Issues Cause Spiritual Abuse**

	AUSOT		CHOG	
	Pre %	Post %	Pre %	Post %
Strongly Agree	6	12		
Agree	35	53	33	50
Uncertain	47	17	67	33
Disagree	12	6		17
Strongly Disagree		12		

For survey question # 2, “I know a great deal about spiritual abuse,” AUSOT students had pretest scores demonstrating that 47 percent disagreed, 12 percent strongly disagreed, 23 percent were uncertain, 12 percent agreed, and 6 percent strongly agreed. AUSOT students’ posttest scores showed that 53 percent agreed, 35 percent were uncertain, and 12 percent disagreed (see Table 9).

CHOG leaders’ pretest scores reveal that 50 percent disagreed, 33 percent strongly disagreed, and 17 percent were uncertain. The church leaders’ had posttest scores indicating that 66 percent agreed, 17 percent strongly agreed, and 17 percent remained uncertain in knowing a great deal about spiritual abuse (see Table 9).

**Table 9. Question #2—I Know a Great Deal about Spiritual Abuse**

	AUSOT		CHOG	
	Pre %	Post %	Pre %	Post %
Strongly Agree	6			17
Agree	12	53		66
Uncertain	23	35	17	17
Disagree	47	12	50	
Strongly Disagree	12		33	



For survey question #29, “recently, I have learned more about spiritual abuse,” AUSOT students’ pretest had scores showing that 35 percent agreed, 6 percent strongly disagreed, 47 percent disagreed, and 12 percent were uncertain. Students’ posttest scores demonstrate that 53 percent strongly agreed, 41 percent agreed, and 6 percent disagreed (see Table 10).

CHOG leaders’ had pretest scores revealing that 67 percent disagreed, 16 percent were uncertain, and 17 percent agreed. Church leaders’ posttest scores show that 67 percent strongly agreed and 33 percent agreed that they had learned more about spiritual abuse (see Table 10).

**Table 10. Question #29—Recently, I Have Learned More about Spiritual Abuse**

	AUSOT		CHOG	
	Pre %	Post %	Pre %	Post %
Strongly Agree		53		67
Agree	35	41	17	33
Uncertain	12		16	
Disagree	47	6	67	
Strongly Disagree	6			

### **Attitude and Opinion**

For survey question #4, “I believe that spiritual abuse occurs when Christian leaders use their position as leaders to abuse others,” AUSOT students’ pretest scores demonstrated that 47 percent agreed, 41 percent strongly agreed, and 12 percent were uncertain. Students had posttest scores indicating that 45 percent strongly agreed and 65 percent agreed (see Table 11).

CHOG leaders' pretest scores show that 50 percent strongly agreed and 50 percent agreed. Church leaders had posttest scores revealing that 67 percent agreed and 33 percent strongly agreed (see Table 11).

**Table 11. Question #4—I Believe That Spiritual Abuse Occurs When Christian Leaders Use Their Position as Leaders to Abuse Others**

	AUSOT		CHOG	
	Pre %	Post %	Pre %	Post %
Strongly Agree	41	35	50	33
Agree	47	65	50	67
Uncertain	12			
Disagree				
Strongly Disagree				

For survey question #7, "I believe Christian leaders spiritually abuse others," AUSOT students' pretest scores demonstrate that 24 percent disagreed, 58 percent were uncertain, and 18 percent agreed. Students' posttest scores show that 41 percent agreed, 35 percent were uncertain, and 24 percent disagreed (see Table 12).

CHOG leaders' pretest scores reveal that 50 percent agreed and 50 percent were uncertain. Church leaders' posttest scores indicate that 67 percent agreed, 16 percent were uncertain, and 17 percent disagreed (see Table 12).

**Table 12. Question #7—I Believe Christian Leaders Spiritually Abuse Others**

	AUSOT		CHOG	
	Pre %	Post %	Pre %	Post %
Strongly Agree				
Agree	18	41		67
Uncertain	58	35	50	16
Disagree	24	24	50	17
Strongly Disagree				

For survey question #3, “I believe as a Christian leader the manipulation of others is acceptable behavior,” AUSOT students had pretest scores showing that 71 percent strongly disagreed, 23 percent disagreed, and 6 percent agreed. Students’ posttest scores reveal that 47 percent strongly disagreed, 24 percent disagreed, 5 percent were uncertain, 18 percent strongly agreed, and 6 percent agreed.

CHOG leaders’ pretest and posttest scores strongly disagreed at a rate of the highest percent that manipulation of others is acceptable behavior (see Table 13).

**Table 13. Question #3—I Believe, as a Christian Leader, the Manipulation of Others is Acceptable Behavior**

	AUSOT		CHOG	
	Pre %	Post %	Pre %	Post %
Strongly Agree		18		
Agree	6	6		
Uncertain		5		
Disagree	23	24		
Strongly Disagree	71	47	100	100

For survey question #5, “I believe emotionally wounded people are weak individuals,” AUSOT students’ pretest scores indicate that 29 percent strongly disagreed, 35 percent disagreed, 18 percent were uncertain, 12 percent agreed, and 6 percent strongly agreed. Students had posttest scores demonstrating that 53 percent disagreed, 11 percent were uncertain, 18 percent strongly agreed, and 18 percent agreed (see Table 14).

CHOG leaders’ pretest scores indicate 50 percent disagreed, 34 percent were uncertain, and 17 percent agreed. Church leaders’ posttest scores show that 33 percent disagreed, 33 percent were uncertain, and 33 percent agreed (see Table 14).

**Table 14. Question #5—I Believe Emotionally Wounded People Are Weak Individuals**

	AUSOT		CHOG	
	Pre %	Post %	Pre %	Post %
Strongly Agree	6	18		
Agree	12	18	17	33
Uncertain	18	11	33	34
Disagree	35	53	50	33
Strongly Disagree	29			

## Research Question #2

How did Christian leaders change in their knowledge, attitude, and behavior about spiritual abuse through the implementation of a spiritual abuse curriculum?

For survey question #26, “I think certain types of personalities are more prone to abuse spiritually,” AUSOT students had pretest scores demonstrating 47 percent agreed, 18 percent strongly agreed, 23 percent were uncertain, and 12 percent disagreed.

Students' posttest scores revealed that 59 percent agreed, 6 percent strongly agreed, 11 percent were uncertain, and 24 percent disagreed (see Table 15).

CHOG leaders' pretest scores indicate that 50 percent agreed and 50 percent were uncertain. Church leaders had posttest scores showing that 50 percent agreed, 17 percent strongly agreed, and 33 percent were uncertain (see Table 15).

**Table 15. Question #26—I Think Certain Types of Personalities Are More Prone to Abuse Spiritually**

	AUSOT		CHOG	
	Pre %	Post %	Pre %	Post %
Strongly Agree	18	6		17
Agree	47	59	50	50
Uncertain	23	11	50	33
Disagree	12	24		
Strongly Disagree				

Behavior is the result of a person's attitude and is very important in determining their healthy or unhealthy practices in leadership. For survey question #8, "I practice empowering leadership," AUSOT students' pretest scores demonstrated that 82 percent agreed, 12 percent were uncertain, and 6 percent strongly disagreed. Students' posttest scores revealed that 71 percent agreed, 6 percent strongly agreed, 17 percent were uncertain, and 6 percent disagreed (see Table 16).

CHOG leaders' pretest and posttest scores were identical: 50 percent agreed, 33 percent strongly agreed, and 17 percent were uncertain (see Table 16).

**Table 16. Question #8—I Practice Empowering Laity to Lead Others**

	AUSOT		CHOG	
	Pre %	Post %	Pre %	Post %
Strongly Agree		6	33	33
Agree	82	71	50	50
Uncertain	12	17	17	17
Disagree		6		
Strongly Disagree	6			

For survey question #21, “In the last 20 years, I have delegated responsibilities to others,” AUSOT students’ pretest scores show that 76 percent agreed, 18 percent strongly agreed, and 6 percent strongly disagreed. Students’ posttest scores indicated that 88 percent agreed, 6 percent strongly agreed, and 6 percent disagreed (see Table 17).

CHOG leaders had pretest scores revealing that 83 percent disagreed and 17 percent were uncertain. Church leaders’ posttest scores demonstrated that 67 percent agreed and 33 percent strongly agreed (see Table 17).

**Table 17. Question #21—I Have Delegated Responsibilities to Others**

	AUSOT		CHOG	
	Pre %	Post %	Pre %	Post %
Strongly Agree	18	6		33
Agree	76	88		67
Uncertain			17	
Disagree		6	83	
Strongly Disagree	6			

### **Research Question #3**

How effective was the teaching of the spiritual abuse curriculum?

The posttest and semi-structured interviews indicated that the method of teaching the spiritual abuse curriculum was effective and informative to the participants. For example, survey question #1, "I have heard about spiritual abuse," posttest results showed that all participants in this study agreed (see Table 5, p.134). Also, survey question #29, "Recently, I learned more about spiritual abuse," posttest results for the AUSOT students increased to 94 percent and all the CHOG congregational leaders agreed.

### **Semi-Structure Interview Results**

Phase Two of this study involved the semi-structure interviews where themes were identified. For the three interview questions see Appendix D. Appendix E is the coding sheet used in evaluating interviews. Five AUSOT students and five congregational leaders participated in the interviews. All participants were sincere and did not indicate masking of behavior, nor did they attempt to tell me what I wanted to hear. The congregational participants are denoted by the letter C following the question number. The ten participants' comments follow.

What, if anything, changed in your behavior since the spiritual abuse presentation? If your behavior has not changed, what have you sensed in observations or interactions of you with others in the Christian Community?

### **Awareness**

All ten interview participants said their behavior had not changed but they have a greater awareness of spiritual abuse. Overall, both AUSOT females and males had the

highest level in response to understanding the role of God in ministry, their awareness of spiritual abuse, and their reactions to the spiritual abuse curriculum.

Several AUSOT participants made comments about awareness:

When you start talking about abuse [spiritual abuse], it touches on your personal stories. When I took the survey before and after, I really felt that I did have a better understanding of what spiritual abuse was. I also felt like it stirred up things. I have been sexually abused so it stirred up some of that same abuse mentality that feeling of powerlessness, that feeling of victimization, and that feeling it just wasn't right. So I guess it touched on my own story a little bit, and then that caused me to really think about how I've come out of that [sexual abuse]. In regards to spiritual abuse, I thought both about the abuser but also the victim of spiritual abuse and how, what, for that person can be done to bring them out to a sense of power again and not a sense of defeat. That was the big thing that I processed. The second piece that came out to me in the talk that you mentioned was how to overcome that [spiritual abuse]. Obviously, the Holy Spirit helps someone that has been abused. (Participant #1)

Some of the elements of spiritual abuse paralleled sexual abuse that Participant #1 shared.

Although, I do believe sexual abuse is a form of spiritual abuse when perpetrated by a spiritual leader; I intentionally did not consider sexual abuse as a part of this study because it would then have taken a path that is beyond the parameters of this research.

Participant #2 also talked about awareness:

I have been aware of maybe not the technical details of spiritual abuse but the potential. One reflection I think you called it the prosecutor or persecutor? The persecutor, one of the five roles leaders plays in a toxic faith system. In the five roles, you don't have to jump too far and you find that being taught as part of a business model where the vision caster is that central pastor figure and then you bring people around you that agree and then a few other people do the ministries and enablers, and those that oppose you, you get rid of. Before you know it you could easily shift from a spirit-led model into an abuse model because the structure is set up in such a way there aren't checks and balances for it.

Participant #2 was the only senior pastor in the study and showed advances in trying to have a balanced and healthy church and to avoid spiritual abuse.



Participant #3 said, “Maybe the awareness is a different lesson,” while Participant #4 declared, “I think the presentation for me was maybe a heightened awareness.” Participant #5 stated, “The presentation was a heightened awareness, if that makes sense.” The CHOG congregational leaders’ comments about awareness came from Participant #6C, “[T]he discussion on spiritual abuse certainly has made me more aware of thing,” Participant #7C, “[M]y awareness of the potential for spiritual abuse; obviously just cognizant of it [spiritual abuse],” Participant #8C, “I am aware of other people but I have always tried to be spiritual with people,” Participant #9C, “In over 42 years of ministry, I have seen pastors that were actually abusive of people sometimes psychologically as much as anything, sometimes just domineering,” and Participant #10C, “I am more intentional with my mentors to think about whether or not I am participating in any kind of spiritual abuse.” In the CHOG, the male participant mean score for awareness level of spiritual abuse was .5 greater than the females.

### **Authority**

Female and male AUSOT students alike scored the highest about knowing the authority of Scriptures. They have witnessed spiritual abuse through abuse of authority. They understand leadership authority. They are conscious how they treat others, and they all have experienced being abused spiritually. Abuse of authority is a layer of spiritual abuse.

What is your belief system (theology) that has shaped your view of spiritual abuse? Participant #1 stated, “Christian leaders are called and equipped by God to be in a position at the same time they are affirmed and given credibility by the church, the

people who hired them, or bring them in to be their pastor.” Participant #2 had new insight:

One reflection I did pull out of there [spiritual abuse presentation] is the connection of the spiritual abuse model that you [researcher] presented and the ways we are taught to be church leaders mirror each other. Spiritual abuse comes from a theology that is not the servant pastor, leader, and shepherd mentality but more of a pastor, leader, dominate mentality where the need to be right and the need to be the one who goes to God.

Participant #4 believed, “My theology would be based upon, we are accountable to God for our relationship with him but also our relationship with others as well.” Participant #5 said, “I guess my belief system especially in terms of doing ministry is ministry should not be about acquiring or hoarding power.” These responses helped ascertain from the participants in the interviews their perceptions and experiences through the spiritual abuse curriculum.

Participant #6C declared, “I basically think that the Bible is the basis of it [belief system].” Participant #7C stated, “I know we should follow godly leadership styles. I don’t think we should be brainwashing people.” Participant #8C thought, “Spiritual abuse can come in a lot of different ways.” Participant #9C said, “Well, I guess my theology is I see myself as a servant. I have never tried to elevate myself above a congregation.”

Participant #10C admitted, “I have been made aware now in a more keen fashion of the reality that our world is broken. I understand its brokenness in a different way now.”

All the CHOG congregation leaders seemed to have grasped the premises of the various theories in their posttest. However, in their interviews they did not reiterate the theories as the AUSO T students did. Perhaps, the difference was the ministry context versus the academic context.

## Abuse of Power

AUSOT students were clear about the abuse of power. Participant #3 expressed, “what I think I guess comes from what you shared with us, but my approach to it [spiritual abuse] is to see it as an abuse of power. You of course, would not want them to physically abuse or sexually abuse. We draw the line there.” Participant #1 declared,

And so in regards to spiritual abuse, my hope is that if someone is misusing their position of authority that God would convict them, that side of the call would be heeded, but also that the church would address it and my colleagues. If you view God as oppressive, forceful presences, then you emulate that and you become like so that it reflects more a negative view of God and you end up serving the God of rules rather than the God of love.

Participant #1 shared an interesting perspective that if Christian leaders are not careful they can see God as a God of rules.

Participant #4 provided her/his view.

I would say that ideally our relationships with each other should be respectful, loving, and treating each with mercy and respect. Spiritual abuse goes counter against those values that would be manipulative, disrespectful, and unloving. It [spiritual abuse] even gets so ingrained that they [Christian leaders] think that it is acceptable theology.

Participant #4 concisely stated how spiritual abuse could become acceptable theology.

Participant #5 commented on the responsibility of Christian leaders.

Pastors are called to shepherd the people. We are called to be caretakers of God's people and to me to take that position and to abuse the people, we are supposed to be taking care of is a gross violation of that calling.

Participant #1 expressed that the subject of spiritual abuse stirred up feelings about being sexually abused, which is an abuse of power by an adult over a child.

One of the CHOG congregational participants' comments summed up the CHOG responses. Participant #6C shared, "Sometimes I think ministers go overboard and they start dictating what happens and that needs to stop." This is a very profound observation.

What safeguards are in your ministry context or local congregation to avoid spiritual abuse? None of the ten participants identified formal safeguards in place to prevent spiritual abuse in the congregation. The senior pastor of the CHOG congregation stated, "The church's staff, those who work for the church, I do not require certain things of staff. Perhaps that is something we [church] need to look into." The CHOG leaders indicated a significant variation between the female and male participants about "witnessing clergy being spiritually abusive." All interview participants said they have witnessed ministers being abused by congregations. The CHOG female participants scored higher on the "healthy view of self" than their male counterparts. Two CHOG female participants disclosed that they have experienced spiritual abuse in their family or cult/mind control of a family member.

All female AUSOT participants experienced other types of abuse. The male AUSOT participants scored 3.0 that they have experienced being abused spiritually but the females had no experience being abused spiritually. Female and male AUSOT participants are conscious of how they treat people.

### **Summary of Major Findings**

Numerous major findings occurred and follow.

#### **Awareness**

The survey data indicated that following the intervention of the spiritual abuse curriculum the responses from both AUSOT students and CHOG congregational leaders

to question #1, “I have heard about spiritual abuse,” both significantly changed (see Table 5, p.134). For question #2, “I know a great deal about spiritual abuse,” the AUSOT students’ scores greatly increased from 18 percent agreed and strongly agreed to 53 percent agreed in the posttest, and the 59 percent in the pretest who disagreed and strongly disagreed decreased to 12 percent disagreed in the posttest. The survey data posttest for the CHOG congregational leaders revealed that 17 percent remained uncertain but 83 percent agreed and strongly agreed that they know a great deal about spiritual abuse.

The survey data for question #29, “Recently, I have learned more about spiritual abuse,” indicated that the pretest results for the AUSOT students was 53 percent disagreed and strongly disagreed, which exhibited positive change to 94 percent agreed and strongly agreed on the posttest, but 6 percent remained in the disagreed column. The CHOG congregational leaders significantly increased from 67 percent disagreed and 16 percent uncertain to all agreed and strongly agreed that recently, they have learned more about spiritual abuse.

### **Authority**

The survey data for the AUSOT students and the CHOG congregational leaders profoundly depicted positive change in the attitudes and opinions in regard to spiritual abuse in the form of abuse of authority. For example, survey question #4, “I believe that spiritual abuse occurs when Christian leaders use their position as leaders to abuse others,” had 12 percent uncertain changed to all agreed and strongly agreed for the AUSOT students. The CHOG congregational leaders remained all agreed and strongly agreed (see Table 11, p.139).

For survey question #7, “I believe Christian leaders spiritually abuse others,” revealed 24 percent of the AUSOT students’ pretest and posttest scores went unchanged (see Table 12, p.140). The CHOG congregational leaders had a 50 percent disagreed decrease to 17 percent disagreed while agreed increased to 67 percent while 16 percent of the participants developed uncertainty.

### **Abuse of Power**

The survey data for question #3, “I believe as a Christian leader the manipulation of others is acceptable behavior,” unfortunately revealed that 6 percent of the AUSOT students’ pretest responses held the view that manipulation is acceptable. Their posttest scores increased to 24 percent agreed and strongly agreed as well as 5 percent uncertain (see Table 13, p. 140). Manipulation of followers is abuse of authority, which is a form of spiritual abuse. Hierarchical paradigms become abusive when Christian leaders use their authority to manipulate followers.

Survey data on question #5, “I believe emotionally wounded people are weak individuals,” brings to the surface Christian leaders’ mistreatment of followers who are emotionally wounded people. For example, the AUSOT students’ pretests responses were in all areas. The AUSOT students’ posttest answers depicted a decrease from 64 percent disagreed and strongly disagreed to 53 percent disagreed and 36 percent agreed and strongly agreed. The CHOG congregational leaders’ pretest showed 50 percent disagreed. On the posttest, agreed and disagreed scores were the same at 33 percent (see Table 14, p. 141). For survey question #26, “I think certain types of personalities are more prone to abuse spiritually,” AUSOT students pretest and posttest remained at 65 percent agreed and strongly agreed. However, uncertain decreased from 23 percent to 11 percent and

disagreed increased from 12 percent to 24 percent. The CHOG congregational leaders' pretest data was 50 percent agreed and 50 percent uncertain and their posttest scores indicated 67 percent agreed and strongly agreed, with 33 percent remaining uncertain whether certain personalities are prone to abuse spiritually (see Table 15, p. 142). The dark side of Christian leaders manifests as passive-aggressive, narcissistic, paranoid, codependent, and compulsive behavior, heaping spiritual abuse up on their followers and becoming a toxic faith system consisting of persecutors, coconspirators, enablers, victims, and outcasts. The five toxic faith characteristics and unhealthy leadership styles of the dark side personalities, controller, humiliator, intruder, victimizer, drifter, freeloader, scurriler, and avoider, bring havoc in the followers' lives.

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION

Christian leaders abuse their followers spiritually in the Christian community . Spiritual abuse occurs when Christian leaders as persons of authority distort the truth and use manipulation and intimidation. The purpose of this study was to evaluate a newly developed spiritual abuse curriculum through quantitative and qualitative measures.

#### Survey Question Results

The Protestant Christian leadership survey questions provided insight into the Christian leaders' ministry perspectives. Survey questions helped in ascertaining Christian leaders' leadership practices.

#### Knowledge

Research question #1 reads, "What was the knowledge and attitude of Christian leaders in regard to spiritual abuse?" In response to survey question #1, "I have heard about spiritual abuse," 12 percent of the AUSOT students had not heard of spiritual abuse, and 29 percent were uncertain. Over half of the CHOG leaders were uncertain whether they had heard about spiritual abuse but significantly changed.

In response to survey question #17, "I have been spiritually abused by a Christian leader," AUSOT students' pretest show that 30 percent of them acknowledged they had been abused spiritually, which decreased to 24 percent in the posttest. In the posttest, students that had not been abused spiritually increased from 53 percent to 65 percent. CHOG leaders' pretest scores for survey question #17, decreased from 83 percent strongly disagreed and disagreed to 67 percent disagreed, indicating they had not been abused



spiritually. Congregational leaders who revealed they were spiritually abused were 17 percent while 17 percent remained uncertain.

Survey question #18, "I have spiritually abused others," is a unique question that gave the Christian leaders an opportunity for self-reflection and self-disclosure concerning whether they have spiritually abused others. The reality is that all Christian leaders at one time or another have abused others spiritually, either knowingly or unknowingly.

AUSOT students adamantly refuted the idea that they had spiritually abused others. However, AUSOT students' pretest scores indicated a strong 70 percent denial about spiritually abusing others. The AUSOT students' posttest scores showed an increase of denial to 76 percent. AUSOT students who were uncertain decreased from 24 percent to 18 percent. AUSOT students' pretest data indicated 6 percent strongly agreed but the posttest report changed to 6 percent agreed.

All of the CHOG leaders were emphatic on both the pretest and posttest that they had not spiritually abused others. A dichotomy appeared when more AUSOT students divulged that they had been abused spiritually but denied they abused others. In Question #17, "I have been spiritually abused by a Christian leader," 18 percent of the AUSOT students shared that they had been abused spiritually. Perhaps, in this situation those who experienced spiritual abuse, learned how to recognize it, how to deal with it, and how to avoid it.

Consistently throughout the survey, data indicated that 6 percent of the AUSOT students remained unwilling to change, unmovable, and fixed in their negative attitudes and took unhealthy positions in Christian leadership. For example, survey question #3, "I

believe, as a Christian leader, the manipulation of others is acceptable behavior” (see Table 12, p. 140), 6 percent of the AUSOT students agreed, which increased to 24 percent agreed and strongly agreed. For survey question #11, “I believe unresolved family issues cause spiritual abuse,” (see Table 8, p. 137), which is a key premise of this study, indicates on the AUSOT students’ pretest that 12 percent disagreed and their posttest decreased to 6 percent disagreed and 12 percent strongly disagreed. For survey question #18, “I have spiritually abused others,” (see Table 7, p. 136) 6 percent of the AUSOT students’ pretest and posttest agreed they had spiritually abused others. Survey question #5, “I believe emotionally wounded people are weak individuals,” (see Table 14, p. 141), 6 percent of the AUSOT students strongly agreed, which increased to 18 percent in the posttest. Also, for survey question #8, “I practice empowering leadership to lead others” (see Table 16, p. 143) and survey question #21, “I have delegated responsibilities to others,” (see Table 17, p. 143) 6 percent strongly disagreed in pretest and became 6 percent disagreed in the posttest. These Christian leaders have control issues and insecurities that cause them to hoard power and authority and lack trust. Participant #5 declared, “Doing ministry should not be about acquiring or hoarding power.”

Survey question #11, “I believe unresolved family issues cause spiritual abuse,” was a central proponent in this study. AUSOT students’ scores increased from 41 percent to 65 percent agreed and strongly agreed. Unresolved family issues cause spiritual abuse. Those who were uncertain decreased from 47 percent to 18 percent. Nevertheless, those who disagreed or strongly disagreed increased to 18 percent. CHOG leaders’ pretest scores for question #11 indicated 67 percent were uncertain. This number decreased to 33 percent in the posttest. Those who agreed increased to 50 percent in posttest. Also, in the

posttest, 17 percent of the leaders disagreed. The combined total of the AUSOT students and CHOG leaders who disagreed was 35 percent. These scores indicated how entrenched people can be in their unhealthy faith systems. Most times people have difficulty accepting a new theory or concept about leadership.

For the AUSOT students' pretest responses for survey question #2, "I know a great deal about spiritual abuse," 59 percent of the AUSOT students thought they did not know a great deal about spiritual abuse. If the 24 percent who were uncertain were added to the 59 percent who disagreed and strongly disagreed, then 83 percent of the students did not believe they knew a great deal about spiritual abuse. AUSOT students' posttest scores showed positive results, changing from 18 percent to 53 percent agreed, while those who disagreed decreased to 12 percent, and those who were uncertain increased to 35 percent. CHOG leaders had significantly changed scores on survey question #2 from 83 percent who disagreed and strongly disagreed to 83 percent who agreed and strongly agreed. However, those who were uncertain remained unchanged.

The AUSOT students' posttest scores on survey question #29, "Recently, I have learned more about spiritual abuse," increased to 94 percent for both the agreed and strongly agreed categories. CHOG leaders' posttest responses showed the greatest change to agreed and strongly agreed.

**Attitude and Opinion** — Research question #2, "How did Christian leaders change in their knowledge, attitude, and behavior about spiritual abuse through the implementation of a spiritual abuse curriculum?" Survey question #4, "I believe that spiritual abuse occurs when Christian leaders use their position as leaders to abuse others," and question #7, "I believe Christian leaders spiritually abuse others," were essential premises in

determining whether the participants' attitudes and opinions accepted the spiritual abuse curriculum that purported Christian leaders perpetrate spiritual abuse on followers. If the participants rejected or denied this foundational premise, then certainly they would not show positive change in their posttests. However, AUSOT students' pretest scores for question #4, "I believe that spiritual abuse occurs when Christian leaders use their position as leaders to abuse others," indicate that 88 percent agreed and strongly agreed and 12 percent were uncertain, but the posttest scores showed significant growth of who agreed and strongly agreed. CHOG leaders' pretest and posttest scores were consistently positive in total agreement.

For survey question #7, "I believe Christian leaders spiritually abuse others," after being taught the spiritual abuse curriculum, AUSOT students' scores shifted so that 35 percent were uncertain, 41 percent agreed, and 24 percent still disagreed. The 24 percent who disagreed in the AUSOT students' posttest is incongruent with their posttest scores in comparison to question #4, "I believe that spiritual abuse occurs when Christian leaders use their position as leaders to abuse others," which all the AUSOT students' posttest responses were strongly agreed and agreed.

CHOG leaders' posttest scores to question #7, "I believe Christian leaders spiritually abuse others," exhibited that the 17 percent CHOG leaders who disagreed represented a substantial change from the pretest score of 50 percent who disagreed. In addition, to the 50 percent who were uncertain prior to the curriculum presentation, they changed to 17 percent posttest scores. For question #4 responses, "I believe that spiritual abuse occurs when Christian leaders use their position as leaders to abuse others," changed for CHOG church leaders to total agreement. Perhaps, this incongruence in both

groups is because the pain is too difficult to accept as a Christian leader that they have harmed others by abusing them spiritually.

For survey question #3, “I believe as a Christian leader the manipulation of others is acceptable behavior,” AUSOT students’ pretest showed that 94 percent disagreed and strongly disagreed that manipulation was acceptable behavior while 6 percent agreed. AUSOT students’ posttest scores decreased so that 71 percent disagreed and strongly disagreed and their scores increased so that 24 percent agreed. Question #3 was concerned with whether or not manipulation is godly behavior. In contrast, CHOG leaders had the best outcome of everyone (pretest and posttest), recognizing that manipulation of others is unacceptable behavior. Church leaders immediately recognized that in their ministry context manipulation is not acceptable.

In the semi-structured interviews, AUSOT Participant #2 expressed very well the denial many Christian leaders have about spiritual abuse:

I have had friends and colleagues who have fallen victim either to some form or fashion, to some kind of abusive patterns, and refuse to hear it. Often the abuse does not come pastor to congregations, it may come church leader to the pastor and when the pastor steps into the role of objector, and then they are booted. I have seen both happen. The unhealthiness of the congregation has made me reflect on these issues a lot and try not to be and not to promote unhealthy attitudes and recognize them when I see them at least as best as I can.

This statement is profound and unfortunately depicts the attitude and stance of too many Christian leaders.

The raw mean score of the AUSOT students’ pretest and posttest responses for survey question #5, “I believe emotionally wounded people are weak individuals,” was the same—2.29. At first glance, one would think the scores of the pretest and posttest were identical and made no changes, but they were not. Changes occurred among

individual AUSOT students. For example, on the posttest, AUSOT students who agreed and strongly agreed increased to 36 percent. Those who disagreed and strongly disagreed changed to 53 percent, and those who were uncertain decreased to 12 percent.

Perhaps, the AUSOT students' scores were going in the wrong direction because the sample size was too small. I believe if more participants were added the scores would increase to the positive side. I had anticipated that the seminary as a learning environment would have yielded higher positive scores, but it did not.

CHOG leaders' posttest scores were spread out equally. All three categories—uncertain, disagreed, and agreed—scored 33 percent. When Christian leaders believe emotionally wounded people are weak (question #5) they lack empathy, which affects how they treat and minister to people, making them feel inferior by being judgmental, and non-Christlike.

Survey question #26, "I think certain types of personalities are more prone to abuse spiritually," was an excellent gauge for ascertaining whether one of the major concepts of this study, that certain types of personalities are more prone to abuse spiritually, was comprehended and accepted. AUSOT students' pretest and posttest scores indicated that 65 percent of the participants agreed and strongly agreed that certain types of personalities are more prone to abuse spiritually. AUSOT students who disagreed increased from 12 percent to 24 percent, and those who were uncertain decreased from 24 percent to 12 percent. CHOG leaders' pretest responses to question #26, "I think certain types of personalities are more prone to abuse spiritually," demonstrated that 50 percent agreed and 50 percent were uncertain. Congregational

leaders' posttest scores yielded 67 percent who agreed and strongly agreed and 33 percent who were uncertain.

### **Behavior**

For survey question #8, "I practice empowering laity to lead others," in the pretest 6 percent of the AUSOT students strongly disagreed and 12 percent were uncertain. Their scores changed negatively after the curriculum intervention when 82 percent who had agreed decreased to 77 percent agreed and strongly agreed. Those who were uncertain increased from 12 percent to 18 percent, and the AUSOT students who strongly disagreed changed to 6 percent disagreed. This negative response indicated that at two months was not enough time to produce positive change. However, leaders having control issues, which can be a form of spiritual abuse, could also explain it. CHOG leaders consistently responded the same in both the pretest and posttest regarding question #8, "I practice empowering laity to lead others." Their responses of 83 percent agreed and strongly agreed combined indicated that they recognized that the empowerment of laity is a strong practice and behavior in their leadership.

For survey question #21, "In the last 20 years, I have delegated responsibilities to others," AUSOT students' pretest and posttest scores totaled 94 percent for those who agreed and strongly agreed. The strongly disagreed categories changed to disagreed, while strongly agreed and agreed remained at 94 percent. Therefore, laity empowerment is vital in Christian ministry. CHOG leaders' responses to the spiritual abuse curriculum were positive. All agreed or strongly agreed that delegating responsibilities to others is important.

## Teaching

Research question #3 was concerned with, “How effective was the teaching of the spiritual abuse curriculum?” The effectiveness of the teaching of the spiritual abuse curriculum was affirmed by the t-test depicting the increase in knowledge and positive changes in attitudes and opinions (see Table 4, p. 133,). The semi-structured interviews also revealed the participants grasped the new concepts and theories taught as vital elements of this dissertation.

## Summary

Symbolic status and a sense of coherence are varied layers of spiritual abuse. In essence, symbolic status is a specific abuse of power where followers psychologically consider their Christian leader as a parent figure (Sankowsky 57). A sense of coherence is an element with the person that is affecting and affected by their development during childhood and socialization (Cohen 50). Symbolic status and sense of coherence factors affirm the premise of family systems theory and the dark side of leadership theory. The family systems theory is purported to be where one is shaped in their family of origin as well as where the dark side is developed and nurtured. Every Christian leader has a dark side that can be redeemed by God. Nevertheless, emotional intelligence is developed in early childhood as well and enhances four dimensions of a Christian leader, which are self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, and leadership management.

In godly leadership, primal leadership and the Pygmalion effect are great assets for Christian to possess. Pygmalion is so powerful that Christian leaders can strongly believe in followers, which empowers and helps the follower make the accomplishment. For a Christian leader to be a godly leader, they must experience within themselves a



deep personal change within their very being, and then their relationship with God and others will thrive (Quinn 11). If the Christian uses primal leadership, the Pygmalion effect, the Perichoretic leadership model, their leadership will be positive and healing. The Christian leader can avoid a toxic faith system.

### **Personal Solutions**

In order to help Christian leaders avoid abusing spiritually their followers, I offer the following suggestions from the findings and literature review.

#### ***Lectio Divina***

A personal help to Christian leaders to avoid abusing spiritually their followers is *Lectio divina*. *Lectio divina* is a wonderful way to study the Bible personally in order to enhance one's connection with God. The movements of *Lectio divina* are

1. *Lectio*—carefully reading Scripture;
2. *Meditatio*—reflecting on insights received through *lectio* (cognitive);
3. *Oratoria*—listening to God and applying Scripture to their personal life;

responding to God honestly through words, thoughts, feelings, decisions, and desires; and,

4. *Contemplatio*—continuing the listening process for new insights developed from the previous three steps (Baab 67).

#### **Creation Gift**

Christian leaders' creation gifts can aid them in avoiding perpetrating spiritual abuse upon their followers. Christian leaders can take a personality test to determine their personality types. Their personalities are shaped by their weight of preference within them, meaning everyone has a beginning gift identified as a creation gift (Johnson 35).

The creation gift is the primary or favorite mental function that shapes the contour of one's soul, representing a special giftedness, whether thinking, feeling, intuiting, or sensing. "This basic gift is the most important aspect of your personality type. It is likely that aspect of yourself which you most wish others understood. It is the lens through which you look at life. It is the compass by which you navigate" (35). A downside or negative aspect exists in every creation gift. Someone may come across to others as cold and calculating, especially to colleagues (37).

In the biblical context, everyone has weaknesses. Paul called weakness infirmities in Romans 8:26, and the infirmities are not sins. Nevertheless, infirmities can be traced back to the fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:14-27). Adam and Eve's disobedience caused disharmony in the Garden of Eden. An infirmity is the inability to render desired results because of one's human limitations (Johnson 38): "When we speak of personality, we must talk not only about giftedness but also about infirmities. For every creation gift there is a weak side" (39). Personality type does not define boundaries or being. A great need exists to balance one's life, which will promote growth in grace and trust.

### **Congregational Solutions**

Suggestions for Christian leaders and their congregations to avoid spiritual abuse follow.

#### **Laity Empowerment**

Another way to avoid spiritual abuse is the missional church approach to leadership. The missional church model enthusiastically approaches ministry by embracing laity empowerment. "Christ taught the Kingdom of God is a community of

God where each member served the other” in love as presented in Galatians 5:13 (Sanders 21). Reformer Martin Luther’s stance and Scripture says that all Christians from the priesthood of believers (Stevens 173). All Christians are called to be disciples, a holy people, and to serve others (Stevens 88). Everyone in a congregation or organization is a leader and everyone is a follower simultaneously (Hackman 88). This concept supports the belief that all Christians are the priesthood of believers and followers of Christ.

### **Congregational Transformational Model**

The Congregational Transformational Model (CTM) is a ministry plan that can help Christian leaders avoid spiritually abusing followers and help a traditional church transition into a new ministry paradigm without inflicting spiritual abuse. The CTM was developed to describe a complex set of challenges, steps, and leadership requirements that are associated with a deep, systemic change effort in an established congregation. The model has three major interdependent and interactive components: (1) spiritual and relational vitality, (2) an eight stage process for change, and (3) four essential learning disciplines (Herrington, Bonem, and Furr 12).

The CTM core involves spiritual and relational vitality that requires Christian leaders to experience deep personal change thus enabling them to bring about transformational change to the congregational system around them in a healthy manner, which can preclude spiritual abuse. Transformational leaders must realize that deep personal change is necessary to help followers embrace a vision of a preferred future as given by God.

A great need exists to cultivate a safe atmosphere of awareness to help people express feelings. Awareness is the starting point for Christian leaders to gain a deeper understanding of themselves and their followers (Herrington, Bonem, and Furr 92).

CTM embraces and incorporates the elements of primal leadership, highlighting emotional intelligence. The CTM model also practices systems thinking in the congregation or organization to integrate learning.

### **Missional Change Model**

The Missional Change Model (MCM) requires a missional leader. MCM leadership is not about special knowledge but cultivation of an environment that releases the missional imagination of God's ordinary people. This model does not use the traditional and secular leadership model of training clergy as professionals (Roxburgh and Romanuk 29). This model is an excellent concept for Christian leaders because it provides accountability as well as checks and balances in ministry. Christian leaders focus on the missional nature of God in this model.

God's mission is calling and sending his people, the church of Jesus Christ, to be a missionary church within society. Mission is not just an add-on program of the church or one that sends people to foreign lands (Guder 5). The congregation or organization comprise of the people of God who are called to be formed into a unique social community whose life together is a sign, witness, and foretaste of what God is doing in and for all of creation (Roxburgh and Romanuk 14).

For Christian leaders to facilitate change, they must personally experience the following: taking stock of what they know, knowing themselves as leaders, actively

listening, focusing on key areas and issues, developing an action plan, and committing to the will of God (Roxburgh and Romanuk 105-08).

MCM is not a quick fix but is designed to assist Christian leaders in cultivating an environment of adaptability and emergent culture in their congregations. Missional leadership is about cultivating a healthy environment within which the people of God can thrive in new paradigms. Missional leaders are mostly concerned about character and formation. Character is the seat where their deep hunger, personal identity, and calling merge for followers to align with the will of God and with their Christian leaders (Roxburgh and Romanuk 126-27). A congregation or organization can be transformed into a missional community rather than being stuck in a cycle of growth, plateau, and decline.

### **Conflict Management**

Other ways to resolve conflict in a congregation are to

1. Establish, discuss, and practice Matthew 18 as the biblical framework;
2. Employ the 360 Degree Feedback process, which includes surveys from staff, supervisor, members, boards, and peers to give leaders greater insight how others perceive them and their ministry (Roxburgh and Romanuk 130);
3. Appreciate differences in gifts and styles by using formal tools such as the DISC Personality Profile and Myers-Briggs (Herrington, Bonem, and Furr 136); and,
4. Identify the four defensive routines that prohibit a team from fully and openly exploring their issues—the logical put-down, the passionate discourse, peacekeeping, and hurt feelings (Herrington, Bonem, and Furr 137).

In the midst of conflict, most people revert to patterns learned in their families of origin, especially when they feel threatened. Quite often these behavioral patterns are unhealthy and counterproductive. This reiterates the premise that conflict skills should be taught and reinforced often to maintain creative tensions.

Traditionally, people are taught that conflict is bad and must be rooted out of the church in order for them to be Christlike, however, conflict is normal in change. "When we engage conflict, we grow and our relationship with the other person becomes stronger," if positive energy is used (Roxburgh and Romanuk 135). Constructive conflict is healthy for a congregation.

### **Unexpected Conclusions**

One unexpected conclusion developed out of the survey data. The survey data indicated that even though a Christian leader is given new and positive information, behavior and attitude changes are not certain. Contrary to the goal of this study, the survey showed that Christian leaders can gain knowledge and insight but refuse to make positive shifts in their behavior and attitude toward followers.

Another unexpected conclusion developed from the survey data. The survey indicated even though Christian leaders were presented new and positive information, that information may not result in a willingness to change positively and apply the new learnings to themselves and their leadership paradigm.

I have learned some Christian leaders are extremists in every arena of their lives. God desires Christian leaders to be balanced and faithful in Christian service that honors and glorifies Christ and not oneself.

I have learned that safeguards against spiritual abuse are daily tasks within Christian leaders as well as outward. Spiritual discernment is necessary in identifying spiritual abuse. An intentional ministry that empowers laity is a way to avoid spiritual abuse. Christian leaders who have regular meetings with accountability partners help to ground themselves in Christ.

I strive to possess genuine humility to serve God's people because servant leadership is the characteristic of an authentic Christian leader. I strongly believe that servant leadership is the call of every Christian believer. This study stretched my understanding of spiritual and psychological aspects of Christian leaders and biblical perspectives. I have learned about Christian conjoint counselors and that anxiety is detrimental to Christian leaders and congregations. Therefore, the paradigm for leading church should be fluid and multifaceted.

In Christian leadership, my personal goal is to avoid being a victimizer, humiliator, and drifter toward God's people. I desire to keep my dark side in check and not to be a part of a toxic faith system. One of my greatest goals is to embrace in a congregation the *metanoia* paradigm of leadership, which is an awakening of intuition of knowing the most high God. Also, I desire to use a systems approach through a perichoretic leadership model and a family systems theory.

In reflection, this study was a healing spiritual journey. I have gained a keen ability to identify spiritual abuse. I have become more cautious in leadership to ensure the well-being of others and myself. In this journey, I have re-examined my family of origin to ascertain any unfinished business and unresolved attachment issues. I feel more

confident in God and wiser through the Holy Spirit. I was reminded that all aspects of my life are interconnected —spirit, soul, and body.

I believe, regardless of the past, one can find healing and redemption in Christ Jesus, if the leader wants to be redeemed from negative and harmful ways of mistreating followers. Despite Christian leaders' past and their families of origin that shaped them, through the mercy of God, the advocacy of Christ Jesus, and the power of the Holy Spirit they can be wounded healers, doing God's ministry. I learned that deep personal change must occur within. In addition, I must lead the people of God from primal leadership and strong emotional intelligence. In order to be in a healthy congregation, leaders need to be healthy, doing family of origin work to understand their dark side and be redeemed by God.

### **Future Consideration**

Conducting this study on spiritual abuse with a larger number of participants would be advantageous to the Christian community. Perhaps, one hundred or three hundred participants would give a broader segment of Christian leadership perspective.

In order to ascertain behavioral changes in Christian leadership, a greater time lapse should occur between data gathering to allow participants adequate time to reflect on newly acquired information.

Another consideration would be to conduct this study in another ministry context to learn if and how spiritual abuse is dealt with in a different Christian culture and paradigm. Also, future consideration could be given to exploring other leadership styles and types of authority. How would these different leadership styles and types of authority respond to a laity empowered organization?



I pray that this study sparked the art of enrollment and inspired Christian leaders to live out Paul's encouragement in Philippians 4:8: "Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable if anything is excellent or praiseworthy, think about such things." If Christian leaders seek God and his direction, they will be victors.

## APPENDIX A

## PROTESTANT CHRISTIAN LEADER SURVEY

## Protestant Christian Leader Survey

[Exit this survey](#)

## Instructions

## INTRODUCTION:

I am conducting a survey of seminarians and church leaders to learn what they know about spiritual abuse as a part of my dissertation. This questionnaire will take no longer than 15 MINUTES TO COMPLETE. I am requesting your help to make this project a success. THIS SURVEY IS BIASED TOWARD PROTESTANT LEADERS. Only a small number have been selected to receive this questionnaire. By filling out this survey you agree to participate in the study. Your response is very important.

Thank you,  
Barbara Olivia Berry  
Doctor of Ministry Candidate  
Asbury Theological Seminary

## DIRECTIONS:

All responses are anonymous. There is no right or wrong answer. Responses are strictly confidential and will be destroyed after this dissertation is approved. Please answer each question.

Read each statement and click the response that most closely corresponds to your view of spiritual abuse – from your experience as a leader in Christian ministry.

Strongly disagree, Disagree, Uncertain, Agree, Strongly agree

[Next](#)

## Protestant Christian Leader Survey

[Exit this survey](#)

### Statements

Read each statement and click the response that most closely corresponds to your view of spiritual abuse – from your experience as a leader in Christian ministry.

1-Strongly disagree, 2-Disagree, 3-Uncertain, 4-Agree, 5-Strongly agree

Responses

1. I have heard about spiritual abuse.

2. I know a great deal about spiritual abuse.

Responses

3. I believe as a Christian leader the manipulation of others is acceptable behavior.

Responses

4. I believe that spiritual abuse occurs when Christian leaders use their position as leaders to abuse others.

Responses

## Responses

5. I believe emotionally wounded people are weak individuals.

Responses

6. In ministry there is a difference between leadership accountability and leadership control.

Responses

7. I believe Christian leaders spiritually abuse others.

Responses

8. I practice empowering laity to lead others.

Responses

9. I teach about spiritual abuse in my local ministry context.

Responses

10. I have the biblical authority and a mandate to control others.

Responses

11. I believe unresolved family issues cause spiritual abuse.

Responses

## Responses

12. I have counseled people who have been spiritually abused by a Christian leader.

Responses

13. In the last 20 years, I have observed leaders spiritually abuse others.

Responses

14. I believe gender plays a role in spiritual abuse.

Responses

15. Christian leaders who spiritually abuse should be removed from all leadership positions.

Responses

16. I am a quiet person.

Responses

17. I have been spiritually abused by a Christian leader.

Responses

18. I have spiritually abused others.

Responses

## Responses

19. During the past 10 years, I have discussed spiritual abuse with subordinates.

Responses

20. Spiritual abuse has affected my current theology of ministry.

Responses

21. In the last 20 years, I have delegated responsibilities to others.

Responses

22. I am easy to approach and talk to.

Responses

23. As a Christian leader, I practice the theory of primal leadership with emotional intelligence.

Responses

24. I believe evangelicals are more likely to abuse spiritually than other Protestants.

Responses

## Responses

25. I believe that male leaders spiritually abuse more often than female leaders.

Responses

26. I think certain types of personalities are more prone to abuse spiritually.

Responses

27. My faith tradition has an established process for dealing with leaders who spiritually abuse.

Responses

28. It is unethical to abuse spiritually.

Responses

29. Recently, I have learned more about spiritual abuse.

Responses

[Prev](#)[Next](#)

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## Protestant Christian Leader Survey

[Exit this survey](#)

### About You

30. Please enter the last four digits of your Anderson University School of Theology student ID number. This will NOT tell us who you are, but it will be useful in matching your answers to your pretest and posttest.

Alternative: If you are not a student at this school, please enter the last four digits of your Social Security number. This will keep your full number from us, and will allow us to match up your pretest and posttest.

31. What is your gender?

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female

32. What is your religious affiliation?

- ☐ Methodist
- ☐ Church of God
- ☐ Assemblies of God
- ☐ Disciples of Christ
- ☐ Baptist
- ☐ Jewish
- ☐ Other (please specify)

33. What are your ministry credentials?

- ☐ Lay Leader
- ☐ Commissioned
- ☐ Licensed
- ☐ Ordained



☐ Other (please specify)

34. What is your marital status?

- ☐ Never Married
- ☐ First Marriage
- ☐ Married, Previously Divorced
- ☐ Married, Previously Widowed
- ☐ Married, Separated
- ☐ Divorced
- ☐ Widowed

35. What is your age?

36. What is your race/ethnicity?

- ☐ Native American
- ☐ White/Caucasian
- ☐ Black/African-American
- ☐ Hispanic/Latino
- ☐ Asian
- ☐ Bi-Racial (please specify)

37. What is your continent/province of citizenship?

- ☐ United States
- ☐ Korea
- ☐ Africa
- ☐ Europe
- ☐ Canada
- ☐ China
- ☐ Other (please specify)

38. What is your highest level of education completed?

- ☐ Undergraduate
- ☐ Graduate
- ☐ Post-Graduate
- ☐ Degree earned

39. What is your current ministry position?

- ☐ Senior Pastor (Solo)
- ☐ Senior Pastor(Staff)
- ☐ Associate Pastor
- ☐ Ministry Director
- ☐ Lay Leader
- ☐ Teacher
- ☐ Chaplain
- ☐ Other (please specify)

40. What is your ministry position status?

- ☐ Paid
- ☐ Volunteer
- ☐ Bi-Vocational

41. How is your ministry position designated?

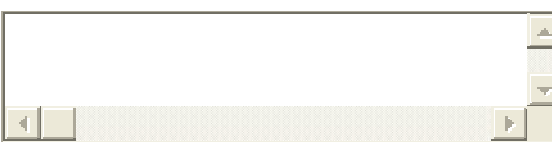
- ☐ Part-Time
- ☐ Full-time

42. How many years of ministry experience do you have?

43. Would you like to learn more about spiritual abuse?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

If yes, what?



44. This survey is being taken by students in the following classes at Anderson University School of Theology. Please click the class that you are taking. If you are taking more than one of the classes listed here, please choose one of them - your answers will then be counted in that class:

- ☐ THST 7340 Ethics for Vocation of Ministry
- ☐ PAST 7470 Leadership
- ☐ PAST 5450 Foundations of Pastoral Ministry

45. Please click "Yes" if you are a member of the congregation that's taking this survey.

- ☐ 45. Please click "Yes" if you are a member of the congregation that's taking this survey. Yes

## **APPENDIX B**

### **SPIRITUAL ABUSE CURRICULUM**

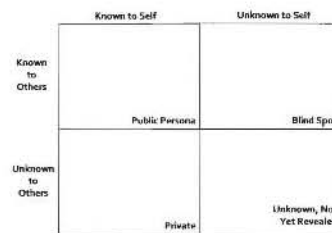
- I. Spiritual Abuse
  - A. Introduction and Definitions
  - B. Existence/Phenomenon
- II. Biblical Framework : Matt 23, Ez. 34, Jude, 1 Pe 5:2-5
- III. Protestant Christian Leadership
  - A. Humility
  - B. Servanthood
- IV. System Theories
  - A. Family Systems Theory
    - 1. Christian Leaders' Family
    - 2. Congregational Systems Theory
  - B. Dark Side of Leadership Theory
    - 1. Development
    - 2. Personality Dysfunctions
  - C. Toxic Faith System
- V. Solutions
  - A. Personal
    - 1. Personality and Creation Gift
    - 2. Spiritual Disciplines
  - B. Congregational: Congregational Transformation Model and Missional Change Model

## Modules

- I. Identifying Spiritual Abuse Module
  - A. Definition of Terms
  - B. Existence
  - C. Totality of Humans
  - D. Spiritual Abuse Is Not
  - E. Spiritually Abusive Systems
- II. Godly Leadership Module
  - A. Servanthood
  - B. Spiritual Leadership
  - C. Authority, Submission, Obedience
- III. Biblical Framework of Spiritual Abuse Module
  - A. Biblical Examples
  - B. Ezekiel 34
  - C. Matthew 23
  - D. Jude
- IV. Systems Theory Module
  - A. Family Systems Theory
  - B. Congregational Theory
  - C. Dark Side of Leadership Theory
  - D. Toxic Faith System
- V. Theory Integration Module
  - A. Perichoretic Leadership Model
  - B. Toxic Personality Types
- VI. Solution Module
  - A. Personal Solutions
  - B. Congregational Solutions

# **SPIRITUAL ABUSE** **IN THE** **CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY**

## **Johari Window**



## **PROBLEM**

Followers are spiritually abused by Christian leaders in the Christian Community causing great harm:

- Shame
- Depression
- Distrust
- Financial destitution
- Suicidal tendencies
- Excommunication

## **DEFINITIONS OF TERMS**

### Spiritual Abuse:

- Mistreatment of a follower
- Distortion of the truth
- Manipulation
- Intimidation
- Control
- Shame
- Fear
- Coercion
- For personal gain and to satisfy personal needs

## **Definitions (Cont'd)**

### Christian Community

- Protestant denominations
- Nondenominational churches
- Christian ministries
- Requiring clergy and lay leaders for:
  - Counseling
  - Teaching
  - Caring for followers
  - Patients

## **Definitions (Cont'd)**

### Protestant Christian Leaders

- Seminarians, minister and lay leaders
  - Spiritual leaders
  - Elders
  - Deacons
  - Board chairs
- Paid and unpaid

### Definitions (Cont'd)

#### Toxic Faith

- Toxic faith is a destructive relationship with a religious system:
  - Not with God
  - System controls a person's life in the name of God

### Definitions (Cont'd)

#### Dark Side

- Inner urges, motivations, compulsions and personality dysfunctions
- Lurking in the shadows of their personality
- In people's personalities since childhood through examples, experiences, expectations, and emotions

### SPIRITUAL ABUSE

#### Is Not

1. When Christian leaders go against your opinion.
2. When any Christian confronts another Christian – sin, wrongdoing, or mistake.
3. When Christian leader is asked to step down with problems
4. Disagreeing on doctrines/issues publically.
5. Holding a certain standard of group conduct.

### Totality of Humans

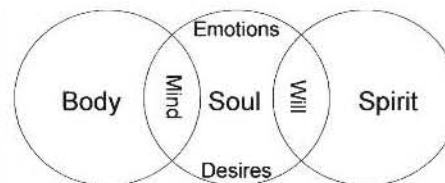


Figure 2. Totality of Humans

### GODLY LEADERSHIP

- First Peter 5:2-3
- 5-6
- Proverbs 11:2-3
- Colossians 2:23
- Romans 12:1
- Matthew 28:18

### SPIRITUALLY ABUSIVE SYSTEMS

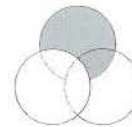
- 1. Power posturing
- 2. Performance Preoccupation
- 3. Unspoken Rules
- 4. Lack of Balance
- 5. Paranoia
- 6. Misplaced loyalty
- 7. Secretive

### Biblical Examples

- Saul - Acts 7:54
- Acts 22:19
- King Saul - I Samuel 18:1-11
- Matthew 7:15
- Acts 20:28-30

### Systems Theory

- New way of conceptualizing
- Interrelatedness of all parts
- Looks for circles of influence



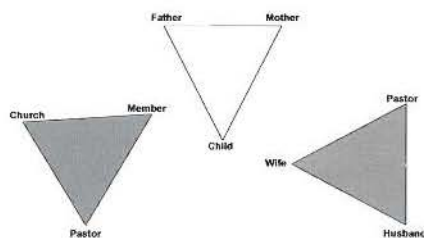
### Family Systems Theory

- Murray Bowen
- Family is combination of emotional and relationship systems.
- Three major concepts:
  1. Differentiation of self
  2. Family ego mass
  3. Emotional field

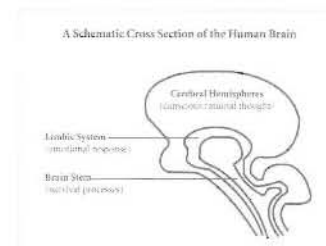
### Self-Differentiation

- Depicts the capacity of two life forces:
  1. Separateness or individuality
  2. Closeness or togetherness
- Homeostasis

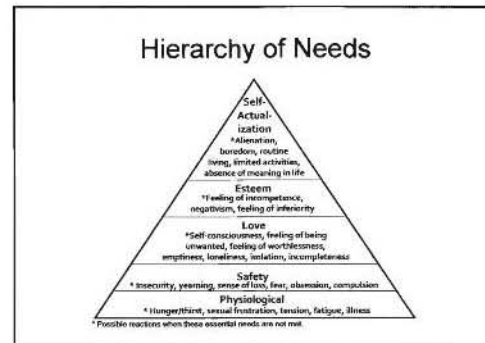
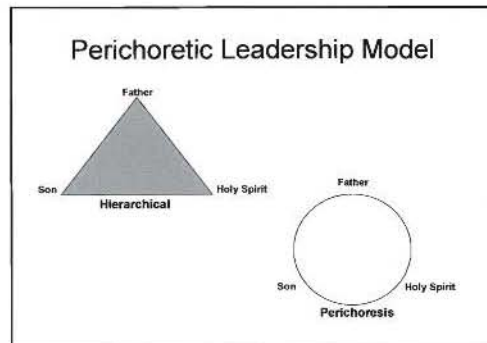
### Emotional Triangles



### Human Brain







- ### TOXIC FAITH SYSTEM ROLES
- Persecutor
  - Coconspirator
  - Enabler
  - Victim
  - Outcast

- ### System Roles (Cont'd)
- Persecutor
- Self-reliance vs. Godly dependency
  - Need to defend against sense of brokenness
  - A workaholic
  - Unhealthy individual
  - Usually narcissistic, can be passive-aggressive or codependent
  - Usually senior Christian leader

- ### System Roles (cont'd)
- Coconspirator
- Make persecutor look good
  - Covers up flaw in persecutor's character
  - Evil plot exists
  - Devises lies and distorts the truth
  - Connives to keep the persecutor in power
  - Probably paranoid and compulsive leader
  - Usually senior associate, assistant pastor or an elder

- ### System Roles (cont'd)
- Enablers
- Passive role
  - Caretakers of persecutor
  - Resent their role, but rarely complain
  - Go along with everything
  - Acts out of survival
  - Knows what is wrong

### System Roles (cont'd)

#### Victims

- Unknowingly and blindly supports a toxic faith system
- Manipulated by persecutor, coconspirator, and enabler
- Never make a fuss or disturb homeostasis
- Rely on Christian leader to spiritually nurture them
- Honored to be a part of group

### System Roles (cont'd)

#### Outcasts

- Sees problem and confronts it
- Unwilling to play the game
- Forced to reveal and labeled complainers, negative thinkers
- Challenges the integrity or disagrees with the Christian leader
- Only one not a religious addict/possessor of toxic faith system

### Dark Side of Leadership Theory

- Dark Side Label
- Personality dysfunctions

**Dark Side Theory** ↔ **Anti-Systems Theory**

### Manifestations of the Dark Side

- Narcissistic leader
- Paranoid leader
- Passive-Aggressive leader
- Compulsive leader
- Codependent leader

### Dark Side Manifestations

#### Narcissistic leaders

- Driven to succeed
- Overinflated sense of importance
- Grandiose fantasies
- Self-absorbed
- Deep feelings of inferiority

### Dark Side Manifestations

#### Paranoid leaders

- Lack confidence
- Fearfulness, suspicion
- Hypersensitive to others actions
- Difficulty developing close relationships

### Dark Side Manifestations

#### Passive-Aggressive leaders

- Control people
- Impatient and irritable
- Pessimistic outlook
- Bitterness and anger
- Erratic emotional behavior
- Emotional outburst

### Dark Side Manifestations

#### Compulsive leaders

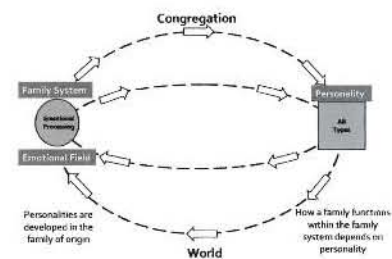
- Pursue extreme perfection
- Need to maintain absolute order
- Outwardly calm, inwardly emotional volcano
- Angry rebellious – does not express true feelings
- Very status conscious
- Overly moralistic, conscientious

### Dark Side Manifestations

#### Codependent leaders

- Generic trait or behavior
- Avoid confrontation
- React to behavior, pain
- Peacemakers
- Immersed in social system with relationships

### Theory Integration Model



### SPIRITUAL ABUSE SOLUTIONS

#### Personal

- Professional Counseling
- Accountability Group
- Spiritual Disciplines:
  - -Devotion
  - -Journaling
- Personality Profiles
  - -Myers-Briggs
  - -DISC Personal Profile

#### Congregational

- Perichoretic Model
- Transformational Model
- Missional Change Model

## APPENDIX C

## OVERCOMING THE DARK SIDE OF LEADERSHIP SELF-INVENTORY

The following inventory is intended to help you identify if you exhibit any Compulsive, Narcissistic, Paranoid, Codependent, or Passive-Aggressive traits. Below are *twelve* groups of *five* statements lettered *A* through *E*. Each question has a possible range of responses. Read each statement and circle the number that most closely corresponds to *your impressions of yourself*. After answering all the items, please “*Score Your Profile*” at the end of the form. **NOTE:** In order to correctly score your profile, all questions must be answered. Use “*Uncertain*” as your choice if something is “*Not Applicable*.”

*Scoring Guide*

1 = strongly disagree    2 = disagree    3 = uncertain    4 = agree    5 = strongly agree

## Group 1

- |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A. I find myself resisting standards and procedures for formal review of my performance.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| B. I often worry that my superiors do not approve of the quality of my work.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| C. When I see two key leaders of my organization discreetly talking, I worry that they may be talking about me.                       | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| D. Fellow leaders in my church or organization frequently question whether my proposed goals and projects are feasible and realistic. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| E. I grew up in a family with one or more substance-dependent people (alcoholics, drug addicts, food addicts, etc.).                  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

## Group 2

- |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A. It is common for me to procrastinate on major projects that I must do.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| B. I am highly regimented in my daily personal routines such as exercise schedule or spiritual disciplines.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| C. It really bothers me to think about my board or leadership team meeting without me being present.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| D. I am obsessed with knowing how others feel about my performance.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| E. I grew up in a strict, legalistic religious environment that held its members to an unrealistic standard of behavior and discouraged open, honest communication about personal problems and struggles. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Source: McIntosh and Rima 240-45. Used with permission.

1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = uncertain 4 = agree 5 = strongly agree

### Group 3

- |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A. I regularly resist others' ideas that could translate into increased performance or responsibility for me.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| B. When circumstances dictate that I must interrupt my daily personal routines, I find myself feeling out of sorts and even guilty for having "skipped" a day.                            | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| C. When an associate receives rave reviews for a project or some special assignment, I experience intense jealousy rather than joy in the success and recognition he or she is receiving. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| D. I find it difficult to receive criticism of any kind, reacting with anger, anxiety, or even depression when it does come.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| E. I am usually willing to put up with or ignore bizarre, embarrassing, or inappropriate behavior in others.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

### Group 4

- |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A. I find myself constantly performing beneath my capabilities.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| B. I frequently find myself conscious of my status in relationship to others.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| C. I require subordinates and associates within my organization to provide me with detailed reports of their activities.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| D. At times I find myself thinking, <i>I'll show them; they could never make it around here without me</i> , when I experience conflict situations or opposition to my proposals and plans. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| E. I often refrain from sharing my opinion in a group setting until I have heard the opinions of others in the group.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

### Group 5

- |  |   |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| A. I experience periodic but regular outbursts of anger and frustration that are just within the bounds of what is considered acceptable behavior.                                     | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| B. It is difficult for me to take an unplanned day off from work responsibilities just to goof around or spend some time with friends or family, feeling like a "slacker" if I do.     | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| C. I struggle when an associate, rather than me, is asked to take on a high-profile special assignment or project.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| D. In spite of achieving what others would consider significant success, I still find myself dissatisfied and driven to achieve greater things in an effort to feel good about myself. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| E. I frequently worry about hurting people's feelings by sharing my true feelings and thoughts.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = uncertain 4 = agree 5 = strongly agree

### Group 3

- |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A. I regularly resist others' ideas that could translate into increased performance or responsibility for me.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| B. When circumstances dictate that I must interrupt my daily personal routines, I find myself feeling out of sorts and even guilty for having "skipped" a day.                            | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| C. When an associate receives rave reviews for a project or some special assignment, I experience intense jealousy rather than joy in the success and recognition he or she is receiving. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| D. I find it difficult to receive criticism of any kind, reacting with anger, anxiety, or even depression when it does come.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| E. I am usually willing to put up with or ignore bizarre, embarrassing, or inappropriate behavior in others.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

### Group 4

- |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A. I find myself constantly performing beneath my capabilities.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| B. I frequently find myself conscious of my status in relationship to others.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| C. I require subordinates and associates within my organization to provide me with detailed reports of their activities.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| D. At times I find myself thinking, <i>I'll show them; they could never make it around here without me</i> , when I experience conflict situations or opposition to my proposals and plans. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| E. I often refrain from sharing my opinion in a group setting until I have heard the opinions of others in the group.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

### Group 5

- |  |   |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| A. I experience periodic but regular outbursts of anger and frustration that are just within the bounds of what is considered acceptable behavior.                                     | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| B. It is difficult for me to take an unplanned day off from work responsibilities just to goof around or spend some time with friends or family, feeling like a "slacker" if I do.     | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| C. I struggle when an associate, rather than me, is asked to take on a high-profile special assignment or project.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| D. In spite of achieving what others would consider significant success, I still find myself dissatisfied and driven to achieve greater things in an effort to feel good about myself. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| E. I frequently worry about hurting people's feelings by sharing my true feelings and thoughts.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

1 = strongly disagree    2 = disagree    3 = uncertain    4 = agree    5 = strongly agree

### Group 6

- |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A. Occasionally I intentionally forget suggested projects.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| B. While away from work, I still find myself thinking about work-related topics, often sitting down to write out my ideas at length, even if it disrupts family activities. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| C. I have few intimate or meaningful relationships within my church or organization and find myself avoiding such relationships.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| D. I am willing to bend rules and press the envelope of acceptable behavior in order to accomplish my goals.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| E. I often feel responsible for problems I did not create.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

### Group 7

- |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A. Sometimes I give others the silent treatment as an expression of my anger.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| B. I like to plan the details of my vacations so I don't waste time or miss anything important.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| C. I insist on absolute loyalty from those who work for me and prohibit staff from criticizing me in any way.                               | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| D. Deep down I find myself feeling jealous of the success and achievements of associates or organizations in my area or field of expertise. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| E. I find it difficult to sleep because I worry about someone else's problems or behavior.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

### Group 8

- |  |   |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| A. I find myself telling others that nothing is bothering me when in reality I am seething inside.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| B. I often explode in anger after being cut off while driving or after being irritated by other petty issues.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| C. I often worry that there is a significant faction within my organization that would like to see me leave.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| D. I am often unaware of or unconcerned about the financial pressures my goals and projects place on those I lead, my family, or the organization I serve. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| E. I find myself frequently overcommitted and feel my life is out of control.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

1 = strongly disagree   2 = disagree   3 = uncertain   4 = agree   5 = strongly agree

### Group 9

- |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A. I tend to be generally pessimistic and feel negative about my future.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| B. I am meticulous with my personal appearance, keeping shoes shined, clothes perfectly pressed, hair carefully cut and groomed, and fingernails clipped. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| C. I have probed people for what they know or for special information they may have relating to certain leaders in my organization.                       | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| D. Success or failure in a project has a direct bearing on my self-image and sense of personal worth.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| E. I find it extremely difficult to say no to people even when I know that saying yes will result in difficulty for me or my family.                      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

### Group 10

- |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A. Others have expressed to me that I make them feel uncomfortable.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| B. I frequently comment about the long hours I keep and my heavy workload but am secretly proud of my "work ethic." | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| C. Those I work with often complain about my lack of a healthy sense of humor.                                      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| D. I am highly conscious of how colleagues and those to whom I am accountable regard my accomplishments.            | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| E. I constantly feel a sense of guilt but have difficulty identifying its source.                                   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

### Group 11

- |  |   |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| A. Strategic planning and goal setting are difficult for me, and I resist such exercises.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| B. When another person makes sloppy errors or pays little attention to detail, I become annoyed and judge him or her.                      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| C. I routinely refer to those I lead as "my people" or "my organization," yet bristle when the same designation is spoken by an associate. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| D. I need to be recognized or "on top" when meeting with a group of fellow leaders or associates.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| E. I feel like I never measure up to those around me and have self-deprecating thoughts.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |



1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = uncertain 4 = agree 5 = strongly agree

### Group 12

- A. Sometimes I catch myself trying to manipulate others in group settings by venting my anger and emotions when facing initiatives I do not support. 1 2 3 4 5
- B. I am obsessive about the smallest errors, worrying that they will reflect poorly on me. 1 2 3 4 5
- C. I tend to take seriously even lighthearted comments and jokes directed at me, feeling there is probably a seed of truth in them. 1 2 3 4 5
- D. I see myself as a nationally known figure at some time in the future or have plans to attain such a position. 1 2 3 4 5
- E. When I receive compliments from others, I find it difficult to simply accept them without making qualifying statements. 1 2 3 4 5

### Scoring Your Profile

To score your profile, go back through the groups of statements and total the scores for each letter. For example, total all of your A's, B's, etc., and place those totals in the spaces provided below. Once you have a total for all the letters, divide the total by five and round to the nearest whole number. Place that result in the Plotting column.

Statement Group	Total	Total divided by 5 and rounded to the nearest whole number	Plotting
A			
B			
C			
D			
E			

### Dark Side Profile

To complete your dark side profile, take the number you placed in the Plotting column and transfer it onto the chart

below on the appropriate axis. To do this, begin at the center of the circle and count the number of circles toward the outside edge until you reach the number in your plotting column, then place a dot at that point.

### ***Plotting Key***

A = Passive-Aggressive    B = Compulsive    C = Paranoid    D = Narcissistic    E = Codependent

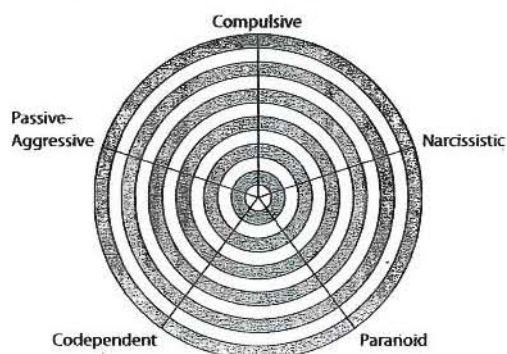


Figure 4

### ***How Does Your Dark Side Influence Your Leadership?***

- 0-4 Little to No Influence
- 4-8 Significant Negative Influence
- 8-12 Potentially Destructive Negative Influence

Once you have plotted all of your scores, you can connect the dots with straight lines to see more clearly where the largest influence of your dark side is located. The points farthest from the center of the circle indicate where your dark side has the most influence in your leadership.

## APPENDIX D

### SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

[Read to each interviewee.] These questions are being asked of students and church leaders. You signed up at the end of the spiritual abuse presentation given two months ago. These questions are a follow-up to the spiritual abuse presentation and Christian Leadership Survey. Your name will not be used in this study. However, I will attempt to incorporate your comments into the study.

[Ask each interviewee.] May I have your permission to tape this interview as well as take written notes? The tape will be erased and notes destroyed upon the approval of this study. Questions will be read verbatim, repeating only the question as often as possible to clarify. There is no set length to an interviewee's response. [Begin with prayer]

1. What, if anything, changed in your behavior since the spiritual abuse presentation? If your behavior has not changed, what have you sensed in observations and interactions of yourself and others in the Christian Community?

2. What is your belief system (theology) that has shaped your view of spiritual abuse?

3. What safeguards are in your ministry context or local congregation to avoid spiritual abuse?

[End with: Is there anything you would like to share with me regarding spiritual abuse?]

**APPENDIX E****CODING GUIDE FOR SEMI -STRUCTURED INTERVIEW**

Likert Scale 1 2 3 4

Key: 1 = None Reported; 2 = Some, 3 = Much; 4 = Significant

Objective : Note any significant themes in knowledge, attitude, behavior, overall impressions, and events reported in interview to explain survey.

#	SCALE AREA	THEME
1	Knowledge	Sovereignty of God
2		God's role in ministry
3		God's role and activity in church
4		Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior
5		Authority of Scriptures
6		Witnessed spiritual abuse
7		Awareness level of spiritual
8		Knowledge gained/retained spiritual abuse curriculum
9		Experienced being abused spiritually
10		Experienced other abuse
11		Do not recall specifics from presentation
12	Attitude	Clergy being abused spiritually
13		Leadership authority
14		Servanthood
15		Church the Body of Christ
16	Behavior	Overall reaction to spiritual abuse presentation
17		Healthy view of self
18		Personal discipline - devotions
19		Conscious how treat others
20		View of family life and relationships
21		Experiences in family regarding spiritual abuse
22		Other

**QUOTES:**

## APPENDIX F

## SEMI-STRUCTURED AUDIO T INTERVIEW MEAN SCORES

Themes	GENDER		MINISTRY		
	Female	Male	Pastor	Lay	Chaplain
<b>Knowledge</b>					
Sovereignty of God	1.3		1		
God's role in ministry	4.0	4.0	2	1	
God's role and activity in church	3.5	4.0	2	1	1
Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior					
Authority of Scriptures	3.0	4.0	1	2	
Witnessed spiritual abuse		3.7	2		
Awareness level of spiritual	4.0	4.0	2	2	1
Knowledge gained/retained spiritual abuse curriculum	3.5	4.0	1	2	
Experienced being abused spiritually		3.0	1	1	
Experienced other abuse	4.0			1	
Do not recall specifics from presentation					
Clergy being abused spiritually	3.0	4.0	2	2	
<b>Attitude</b>					
Leadership authority	3.5	4.0	2	2	1
Servanthood	3.0	3.5	2	1	1
Church the body of Christ					
Overall reactions to spiritual abuse presentation	4.0	4.0	2	1	
<b>Behavior</b>					
Healthy view of self	3.0	4.0	2	1	1
Personal disciplines—devotions					

Themes	GENDER		MINISTRY		
	Female	Male	Pastor	Lay	Chaplain
Conscious how they treat others	4.0	3.7	2	1	1
View of family life and relationships	3.0	3.5	1	1	1
Experienced spiritual abuse in their family		4.0	1	1	
Other boundaries		4.0	1		

## APPENDIX G

## SEMI-STRUCTURED CHOG INTERVIEW MEAN SCORES

Themes	GENDER		MINISTRY		
	Female	Male	Pastor	Lay	Chaplain
<b>Knowledge</b>					
Sovereignty of God		4.0	1		
God's role in ministry					
God's role and activity in church	4.0			1	
Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior		4.0	1		
Authority of Scriptures	4.0	4.0	2	3	
Witnessed spiritual abuse	4.0	4.0	1	2	
Awareness level of spiritual	3.5	4.0	2	3	
Knowledge gained/retained spiritual abuse curriculum	3.5	3.5	2	2	
Experienced being abused spiritually	4.0	4.0		2	
Experienced other abuse					
Do not recall specifics from presentation	1.0	1.0	2	3	
Clergy being abused spiritually	4.0	2.0		2	
<b>Attitude</b>					
Leadership authority	4.0	4.0	1	2	
Servanthood		4.0	1		
Church the body of Christ		4.0	1		
Overall reactions to spiritual abuse presentation	3.5	3.0	2	3	
<b>Behavior</b>					
Healthy view of self	3.0	2.0		2	
Personal disciplines—devotions		4.0		2	

Themes	GENDER		MINISTRY		
	Female	Male	Pastor	Lay	Chaplain
Conscious how they treat others	4.0	4.0	2	3	
View of family life and relationships	3.5			2	
Experienced spiritual abuse in their family	4.0			2	
Other boundaries	4.0			1	



## APPENDIX H

## DEMOGRAPHIC BREAKDOWN OF AUSO T STUDENTS

Christian Leadership Survey All = 17	Female	Male	Years of Ministry Experience (Mean)
<b>GENDER</b>			
Female	9		6
Male		8	4
<b>MINISTRY</b>			
...Senior pastor		1	Solo
· Associate pastor		1	
ÒMinistry director	2		
ÕChaplain	1		
÷ Teacher	1	1	
Full-time student	1	2	
ÉLay leader	3	4	
<b>AGE (Mean)</b>			
< 30 years old	27	27	
> 31 years old	36	31	
Unmarked		1	
<b>DEGREE</b>			
Undergraduate	9	6	
Graduate		1	
Unmarked		1	
<b>RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION</b>			
Church of God (Anderson, IN)	8	8	

<b>Christian Leadership Survey All = 17</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Years of Ministry Experience (Mean)</b>
Nondenominational	1		
<b>RACE/ETHNICITY</b>			
Black/African-American	1		
White/Caucasian	8	7	
Unmarked		1	
<b>MARITAL STATUS</b>			
Never married	3	2	
First marriage	3	6	
Divorced	1		
Married, previous divorce	1	1	

...Ordained full-time paid

· Commissioned part-time paid

Ø 1 Ordained/1 licensed part-time volunteer

Õ Ordained part-time volunteer

÷ 1 lay leader/1 commissioned part-time volunteer

€ 1 licensed/6 lay leader part-time volunteer

## APPENDIX I

## DEMOGRAPHIC BREAKDOWN OF CHOG LEADERS

Christian Leadership Survey All = 6	Female	Male	Years of Ministry Experience (Mean)
<b>GENDER</b>			
Female	5		18
Male		1	30
<b>MINISTRY</b>			
...Pastor		1	30
É Lay leader	5		
<b>AGE (Mean)</b>			
< 50 years old	48		
> 51 years old	60	54	
<b>DEGREE</b>			
Graduate	4		
Postgraduate		1	
Unmarked	1		
<b>RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION</b>			
Church of God (Anderson, IN)	5	1	
<b>RACE/ETHNICITY</b>			
White/Caucasian	5	1	
<b>MARITAL STATUS</b>			
First marriage	2	1	
Married, previous widow	1		
Divorced	1		

Christian Leadersh ip Survey All = 6		Female	Male	Years of Ministry Experience (Mean)
Widow		1		
...Ordained part-time paid bi -vocational				
÷ Lay leader part -time vo lunteer				

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